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CAIUS GRACCHUS.

A Tragedy,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY LOUISA S. McCORD.

"The seeming truth which cunning times put on
To entrap the wisest."

Merchant of Venice.

NEW-YORK:

H. KENNEDY, 233 BROADWAY.

1851.



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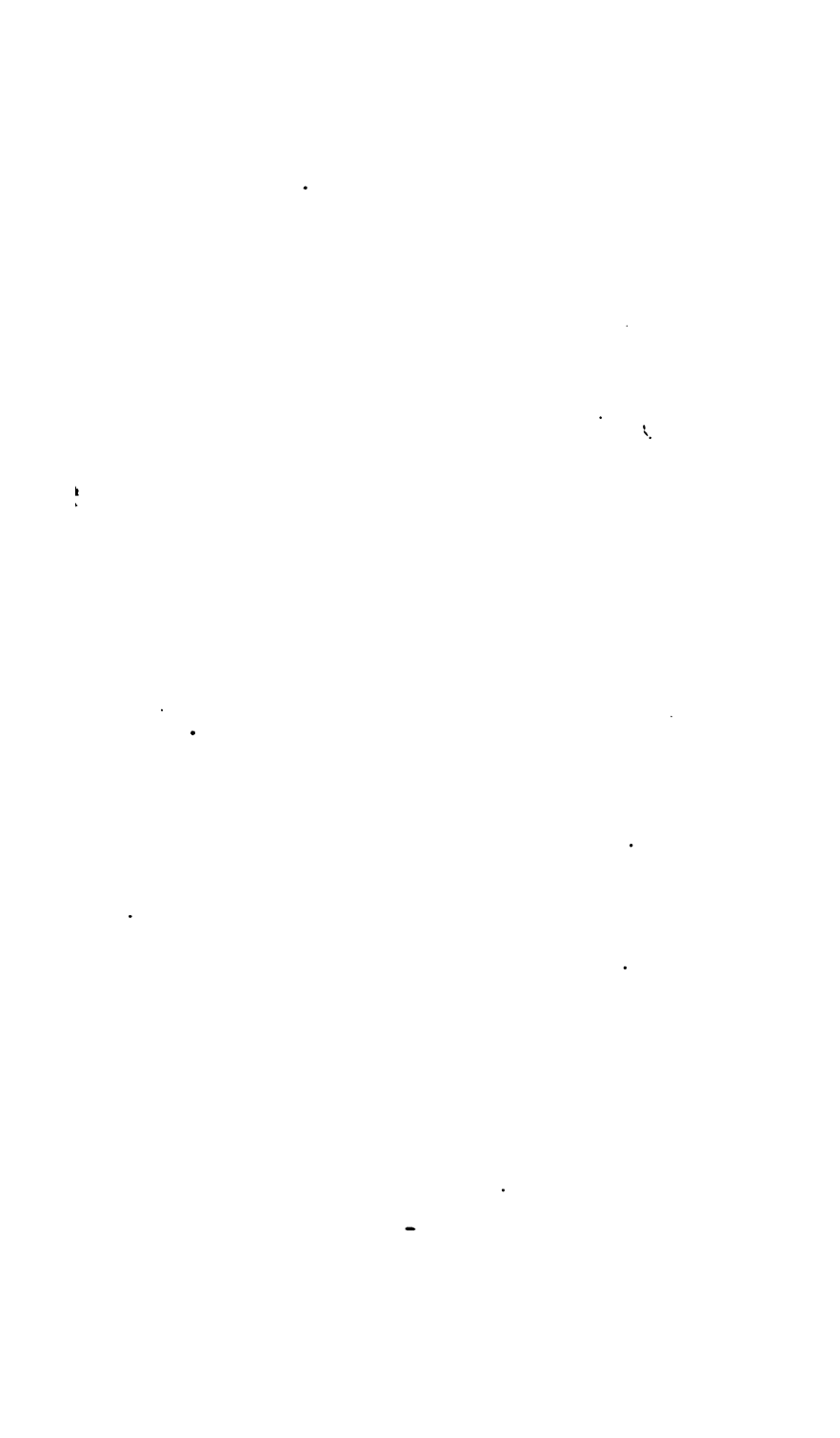
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CAIUS GRACCHUS.

A TRAGEDY.



CHARACTERS.

CAIUS GRACCHUS.

OPIMIUS, }
LUCULLUS, } *Roman Senators.*

POMPONIUS, }
LICINIUS, } *Friends of Gracchus.*

FULVIUS, *Factionous Citizen.*

SEPTIMULIEUS, *Citizen.*

LIVIVS DRUSUS, *Tribune.*

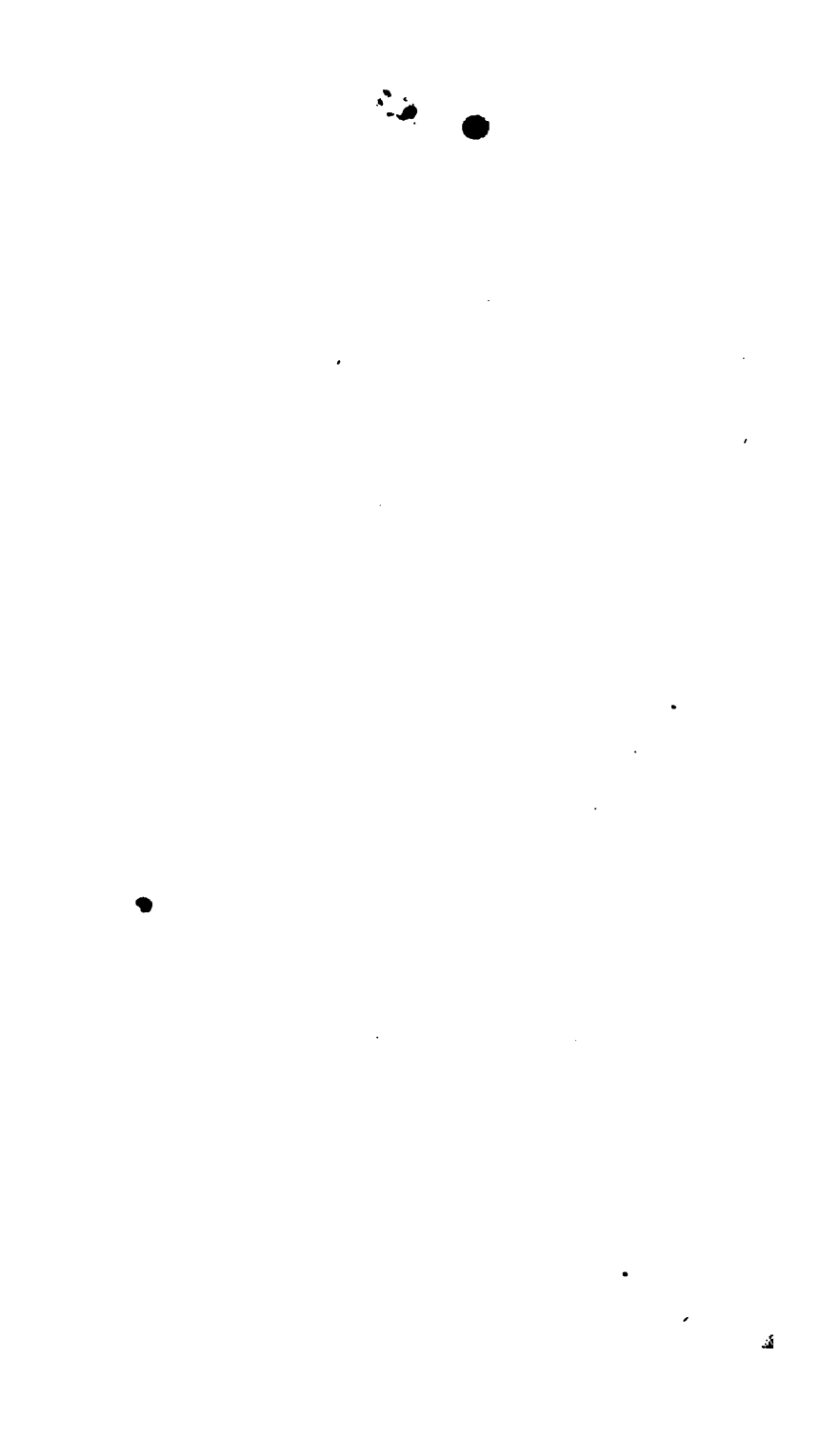
PHILOCRATES, *Slave of Gracchus.*

CORNELIA, *Mother of the Gracchi.*

LIOINIA, *Wife of Caius Gracchus.*

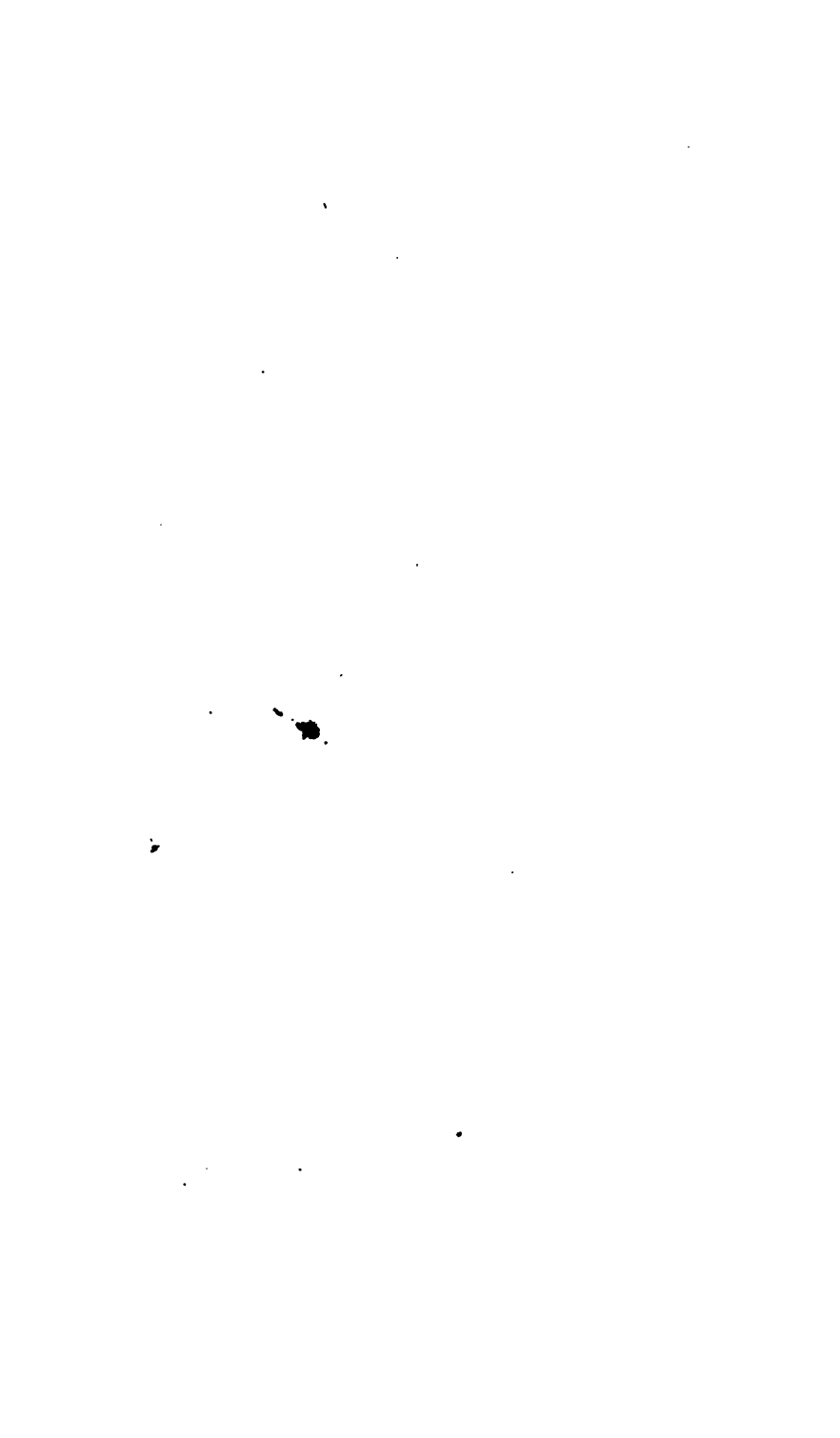
Senators, Citizens, Tribune, Child, &c.

The Scene is at Rome. First Scene of Fourth Act, in Carthage.



TO MY SON.

Too young thou art to read a Mother's heart ;
Too young to guess that quenchless fount of love
Which ever gushes forth in joy and woe,
Limitless, always.—If careworn and sad,
By want or sickness bowed almost to earth—
Or yet if triumphing in life's success,
Flattered, beloved, admired,—the Mother finds
(Be she true woman with a woman's heart) ✓
No moment when that heart can idly rest
From the long love which ever fetters it
In bondage to her child.—My boy, thine eye
Some day perchance may fall upon these lines,
And catching here the shadow of my love,
Thy soul may guess its fulness, and may feel
Through every struggle in this changing life,
That, like a guardian angel hovering round,
To comfort, check—to pity, or to blame,—
To chide, to hope, to pray,—it watching stands,
But never to condemn.—A Mother's heart
Might throb itself away in patient woe,—
Might break to end its pang,—but never, never
Could deem her child a thing of vice or shame.—
God bless thee, boy ! and make thee stainless, pure,
Upright and true, e'en as my thought doth paint thee.



CAIUS GRACCHUS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—A Street of Rome.

Pomponius and Citizens.

POMPONIUS.

Orestes stays to keep his quæstor with him.

FIRST CITIZEN.

And will he bear it, think you?

POMPONIUS.

Will who bear it?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Why, Caius Gracchus.

POMPONIUS.

Truly, I think not.

He's not the man I deem him, if he bear

Outrage so foul and grossly palpable.

No longer mince these senators their doings,

But boldly now (enough that Gracchus did them)
His noblest acts they read in backward sense.
With juggler's slight the cheated eye to trick,
They show black, white ; white, black ; and merit trip
From virtue into fault.

SECOND CITIZEN.

We've heard the talk
How, when the Senate could not manage it,
He from the cities for our troops procured
Their needed clothing ; and how fumed the Senate
Because, forsooth, 'twould make the people love him.

POMPONIUS.

Yes, but ye have not heard how, few days since,
Micipia sent ambassadors to say
That, through regard to Caius Gracchus, he
To our Sardinian troops would furnish corn,—
And wot ye, how the Senate sent their thanks ?

FIRST CITIZEN.

Well, what said they ?

POMPONIUS.

They said,—but mark me well,—
Note what paternal love they guard us with ;
They said they would not take one grain of the corn ;
Our troops might starve, ere they should live from aid
That through the means of Caius Gracchus came.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Fie ! fie ! you joke with us ! Did they say that ?

POMPONIUS.

Ay, and the ambassadors, with loud insult thrust
Forth from the Senate-house, were bid begone,
To tell Micipia that his proffered aid
Rome needed not ; that we were rich in corn ;
That Caius Gracchus had no other end,
Only his name to wind to Rome, by sending
These hired flatterers of his proud ambition.
Such words, and other oft, as rough repeated,
They were bid take with them, and pushed away
From our proud Senate-halls. And now our troops
May starve, forsooth, or steal, or eat their bucklers ;
Ye know, ye Roman citizens, how full
Our granaries are ! What though we die like rats,
And through our sewers if dead corpses sweep
Foully putrescent ! our patricians bear
Musk to their noses,—scented vinegar,
Snuffing of spices ; swear these corpses have
A stench plebeian, most unfit and vexing
To their patrician, nice olfactories !
We die ! What then ? The Senate is content,
So we live not through Caius Gracchus' means !

FIRST CITIZEN.

These are our rich !

POMPONIUS.

Ay ; and the sequel now
We find of this, his crime unpardonable,

That Caius still must in Sardinia drag
A longer life of exile.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Of our Senate

This then is the decree ?

POMPONIUS.

Ay ; doff your caps !

Be humbly thankful ; bow to it, my brothers ;

This the decree of our patrician fathers !

(Clamors and hissing.)

Enter Opimius and Lucullus.

OPIMIUS.

What noisy riot's here ? What have ye, thus
Gathering in crowds, to plot and murmur at ?

FIRST CITIZEN.

We would have Gracchus back.

OPIMIUS.

Have Gracchus back !

Gracchus is at his post ; what would ye more ?

He's honored in his office, and remains

Selected to it, by the Consul's will.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Ay ; long enough you've honored him. We'd like

To see him back, and hear his own account

Of matters in Sardinia.

OPIMIUS.

Wranglers ever !

Thus are ye always, restless, discontent,
And gaping with large mouths, at what, ye know not.
Leave Gracchus to his duties, and the Senate
Will give to the country's servants honor due.
Off to your work ! The days are turning long,
That ye find time in the streets to linger thus,
So many hours of your nothings talking.

FIRST CITIZEN.

We talk of Caius Gracchus.

OPIMIUS.

Insolent !

Who heeds of what ye talk ! Off ! off ! I say.
Are ye not satisfied your share to leave
To your own tribunes, of the government ?
You'd all be lords, forsooth, and make your laws
The hungry appetite to suit of each
New, squalling brat, who comes into the world
To help eat out our city dry, and then
Put finger in his eye, and pule and whine,
To catch his neighbor's dinner. Off ! begone !
Away to your work ; and meddle not, nor make ;
For ye might chance to break, where ye would mend.

FIRST CITIZEN (*aside.*)

Thus they out-talk us. We had best away,
But let us give one cheer before we go. (*Aloud.*)

Huzza for Caius Gracchus !

CITIZENS.

Huzza ! huzza !

(Exeunt Citizens, with Pomponius.)

LUCULLUS.

Do you note that ?

OPIMIUS.

Ay, damn him ! Note it well !

He'll be the incubus will ride us yet ;
And faith, he'll spare no spurring when he mounts.
His flashing eye has that within it speaks
A daring spirit, near which, did he live,
Tiberius now would seem to us mild and humble.
His voice has tones which strike into the heart.
I late was in Sardinia, and I heard
When he addressed the troops. There was a thrill
Upon each noted wording of his tongue
That made me shiver. Terror was upon me,
And why I knew not. While I hated him,
And could have plunged a dagger to his heart,
Tears crept into mine eyes, and I must weep
When he upbraided them their want of duty.
I felt as if myself had sinned, and been
The recreant soldier, whom his tongue disdained.
And when he spurred them to a nobler course,
My bounding heart burst forth its loud huzza ;
Spite of myself, it worshipped Caius Gracchus.

And yet I hate him. If his burning words
Can stamp them so, upon a heart like mine,
Which nature, circumstance, and every tie
Point him its bitter, great antagonist,
What wonder if the people hail him home,
Not with applause, but wild and frantic transport !

LUCULLUS.

He must not come ; for the ripe city waits,
Like willing damsel, wanton at his wish,
To fall into his arms.

OPIMIUS.

He must not come,
If art or fraud can hinder. I have feared him
Since first (how well I note the day) he stood,
Forgetting all the sham of modesty
That he had nursed to cheat our foresight off,
And in the rostra boldly dared to stand
In loud defence of Vettius. How he threw
From his bared shoulder the discarded gown !
And stamped, and strutted, in fierce passion casting
His fluent words in eloquent appeal
Forth to the tranced people, who screamed out,
Maddened almost for joy, their raptured triumph,
In hailing their plebeian orator.
I hate the villain, from my heart's deep core,
And I would scant at nothing which could cast
The people from their love and worship of him.

Pshaw ! here comes trooping back the noisy crowd ;

I have no stomach for their prate to-day—

Let us pass on.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—*The same.*

Enter Citizens, with Pomponius and Fulvius.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Huzza for Caius Gracchus ! Coming back !

Huzza ! Huzza !

SECOND CITIZEN.

Huzza for Fulvius too !

Come, three times three ! Huzza ! huzza ! huzza !

THIRD CITIZEN.

But tell me first, what mean you ? that he'll come
Spite of the Senate's orders ?

FULVIUS.

Bah ! unlearn,

If ye are Romans, that poor starling note,
Ever the same, of "*orders*," "*Senate's orders*" !
Are ye not men to feel when ye are trampled ?
Are ye not men to turn, if ye be struck ?
Or will ye bide the *Senate's orders* still,
And fight, and work, and pine, and starve, and die,
By senatorial, august decree !

THIRD CITIZEN.

But still it is unheard of that a quæstor,
Abandoning his post, should suddenly
Thus unattended, leave his general.
It is a knotty question, and I'll ask
Our tribune Livius Drusus, who comes yonder,
What is the law of right, in such a case.

POMPONIUS.

Ask Livius Drusus! He's but half a tribune;
For with his conscience while the Senate tampers,
He dallies with their gold, and fingers it
Until truth finds no color in his eyes,
But only yellow gilded. Let him pass.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Nay, let him speak; he is our tribune still,
And slander may mis-speak him. (*Enter Drusus.*)

You have heard

Some talk perhaps of Gracchus' coming home,
And that he's looked for presently. We're puzzled
To know what we should think of the affair.

DRUSUS.

Think of it, as all quiet citizens
Should think of mutiny against the laws
Of our paternal Senate. Think of it
As of a bad example, to be shunned,
And meet him with your frowns.

FULVIUS.

Ah ! who is this ?

My once-time friend ! Why Livius Drusus, you,
When last I quitted Rome, ('tis, let me see,
Some three, four years ago,) were then, me-seems,
A noble-minded Roman, who cringed not
Flattering the mighty rich. 'Tis true, this gown
Was of a coarser texture ; Livius showed
Less exquisite in dress. •I'm from the camp,
And have forgot how city manners change ;
This butterfly, fresh from the chrysalis,
Must read my lesson to me. When he crawled
In caterpillar form, I can remember
That Caius Gracchus was to him a God,
To whom he could not low enough demean
And bow himself to the earth ; but now his wings
Belike, being spread, he'd soar a higher flight.
I crave your pardon, Drusus ; you would take
Your place in the Senate ; or, at least, have lands
And monies to re-gild those gaudy wings.
True ! true ! all this must be ; and then of course,
When in the palm of every Senator
Who meets you bowing, glittering silver lies,
And with his " Good-day, Drusus," he doth slip
The bait into your sleeve, how can it be
That Gracchus should be other than a scoundrel !
Faugh ! Let us go ! His cant doth sicken me !

Paternal Senate, says he ! Ha ! ha ! ha !

Paternal humbug ! Curse it ! Let me pass.

(Exit with Pomponius.)

DRUSUS.

Hear, citizens ! This is your Gracchus' friend !

Note how he taunts your tribune, and judge then

What to expect from him who taught the lesson.

This forwardness it is for you to check.

When Gracchus comes, be shy of him, and cold ;

With distant look as of inquiry stand,

Staring as though his features were forgot,

And you would try to think if you had seen

The stamp of them before ; then shake your heads

And turn away indifferent. Hark ye farther,

Let's have no palming with him. Mark ye well ?

SECOND CITIZEN.

Ay, ay ; let us alone. We'll make him know

How to respect our honorable Senate.

DRUSUS.

Well then, remember.

(Exit Drusus.)

FIRST CITIZEN.

That's our tribune, is it ?

And you will mind him ! Curse you for a fool

And scurvy knave ! This Drusus is not worth

One little finger of our Caius Gracchus,

And yet you stand there, staring while he talks

As though his words were oracles.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Be still ;

Let me alone and mind your own affairs.

See how your Gracchus will work out of this !

(Exeunt.)

SCENE III.—Room in Cornelia's house.

Cornelia and Licinia.

CORNELIA.

Nay, stay within doors, daughter ; 'tis the place
Most meet and fitting woman. In a crowd
Showing like this the angry feelings, jarring
And froth of human passion, if you track
In loneliness your unprotected way,
You chance to meet rough words and harsh misuse.

LICINIA.

But only some few yards ! Pray let me go !
I'll wrap my mantle well, so none shall know me.

CORNELIA.

And should you chance to meet your husband thus,
What would you gain ? With that wild crowd around you,
You would not dare to greet him to his home.
A quiet comeliness there is, becomes
A woman's greeting ; and believe me, dear,

However daring bold himself may be,
Man never loves, within a woman's eye, ✓
To see the mimic of his conduct glassed.
'Tis meek endurance, quiet fortitude,
That make her life and beauty. We may rear
Heroes, whose dauntless will shall shake the world,
Or like a moral Atlas, bear its burden,
A universe of care, upon their shoulders.
But in our bosoms, if too fierce the flame
That feeds such spirit-struggles, we must check,
Or drive it back, at least, to seeming quiet.
If hard the effort, it is woman's task.
Her passions, if not smothered, must be hid, ✓
Till in their faintly-beating pulse, herself
Will scarcely know her blood the same which bounds
Through manlier veins unchecked.

LICINIA.

But mother, you
Methinks are hardly glad to know he's coming.
Your cheek has found no flush of expectation,
Your eye no glance of triumph. There you sit
And argue calmly with me, while I'm mad
To strain him to my heart.

CORNELIA.

Your love, my child,
Is wild with youth. Mine, sobered with life's age,
By thought and sorrow tamed to curb itself,

Is therefore not less true, and might perchance
Die for the loved one, full as soon as yours.

LICINIA.

But tell me, mother, when you heard it said
Your son was coming home, why did a tear
Start to your eye? And while my poor heart beat
And fluttered with the wildness of its hope,
Why did you simply wipe that tear away,
Nor ever even say, "I'm glad to know it"?
Surely you love him, mother!

CORNELIA.

Surely, yes.

But see, the loved one here!

Enter Gracchus.

GRACCHUS.

Ah! my sweet bird,
Who watchest for thy mate, now tune thy song
To welcome home the wanderer. Mother, here
I bring you home the heart whose thought hath been
Ever for you, this dear one, and for Rome.

CORNELIA.

Welcome to Rome, my boy.

LICINIA.

But thou art strange!
Why truly, mother, thou didst promise right
That I had lost my love. This is not he!
This bearded soldier, seamed and browned in the wars!

GRACCHUS.

What, saucy one ! Would'st thou disown thy lord ?
Nay, I am used to keep a stricter rule,
And will allow no mutiny in the camp.
So rebel, come, that I may punish thee
With this, and this,—and thus with kisses plague thee !

LICINIA.

Nay ; get thee gone. I must perforce admit,
By these rough ways, thou'rt still the feather-head
Who left me here, some many years ago.
I thought thou hadst grown wiser.

GRACCHUS.

How's this, mother ?

You have not been half strict enough, I fear,
In the training of this sauce-box. But, your pardon,
I am a fool ; for I stand trifling here,
While your grave look has some big import in it.
What is it, mother ? Speak. I too have learned
To wrap me much in deeper thoughts of late.

LICINIA.

Nay, Gracchus,—prithee, love ! nay, not that look !
Thou mak'st me thus already weep to think
That thou art come again to this stern Rome.

GRACCHUS.

What, have you not grown older ? Still the same
My little pet must pout its rosy lip,
And sulk at business, when it rivals love !

Smooth down thy ruffled feathers, pretty one ;
For surely not my wish, but need, doth force
My thought aside so soon, to wander from thee.
Mother, your anxious look should find its words.

CORNELIA.

Unwillingly, with harshness thus to break
Upon our happy meeting ; but I fear
Each moment lost is so much life-blood drawn,
Weakening your cause, to make it hang its head
As evil-conscienced, or as sick at heart.
Rome's all a-fire ; and your best lovers now
Half-turned against you, pondering, shake their heads
As doubtful of your course.

GRACCHUS.

What ! would they wish
To see me drag out life the Senate's drudge ?
To rot away my soul, like worthless carcass
In the highway cast, for daws and crows to pick at !
Toil down my spirit to old age's weakness !
All for the profit of the proud usurpers,
Who from between our teeth the hard-earned bread
Snatch wantonly, to make them luxuries
At which the starving people stare, and wonder
What are their uses and their purposes !

CORNELIA.

Be cool ! be cool ! and heed that you do not,
In blaming one extreme, to the other rush.

But for the present, think first of yourself,
And purge yourself from rashness. Claim your right,
Making appeal to the censors of your cause.
Where you are slandered, charge the slander back,
And cleanse the name that envy seeks to blot.

GRACCHUS.

Mother, you're right. I loiter here too long.
Farewell, Licinia, I'll be quickly back.
Send your best wishes with me and cheer up.
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.—*Street of Rome.*

Septimulieus and several Citizens.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Now is the time for Gracchus' friends to rise ;
And I may count, I'm sure, as one of them.
He knows what he's about, and he has forced
The censors to a hearing. He's an eye
Into the marrow of a thing that looks
As deep as any man's.—

FIRST CITIZEN.

And you, who watch
Ever the veering wind, make up your mind
That now into his sails it fairly blows,

And trim accordingly. I hope indeed
Your judgment may, for his sake, be a true one.

SEPTIMULIUS.

'Tis time we should of the event hear news.
Ah! here it comes! Licinius and Pomponius;
They'll tell us all about it.

Enter Licinius and Pomponius.

Good-day! Good-day!

My hearty greetings do attend ye both.
Good luck to you, and all of Gracchus' friends!

POMPONIUS.

You love him well.

SEPTIMULIUS.

Ay; and I hope not low
He counts in his esteem my humble service.
Now pray ye, let us hear how goes the trial!

POMPONIUS.

Fully the censors have acquitted him.
How could they less, when truths showered on them so?
He showed how he his duty had surpassed,
And served for years, more than the law obliged;
How he had gone forth rich, and come back poor,
While others piled their wealth of hoarded gains,
Stolen treasures, griped from conquered provinces
And towns 'neath taxes groaning. When they dared
Implied conspiracy to charge him with,
His flashing indignation struck all dumb

The cowardly accusers, finching, who
Did eat the words which scarce had passed their lips ;
Their strangled statements shuffling, turning o'er,
Backward their import, to excuse it, working.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Of what conspiracy could they accuse him ?

POMPONIUS.

Of favoring commotions 'mong the allies,
And waking up revolt throughout the states
Of conquered Italy.

LICINIUS.

Ah ! there peeps out
The stumbling block, that lies in Caius' path.
But we'll pass on. Good-day to you, citizens.
Will you walk with us, Septimulieus ?

SEPTIMULIEUS.

No,

I have much pressing business on my hands.
Wish you good-day, and much prosperity,
To you and all of Gracchus' friends. Their merits
Weighed truly, are enough for them. Farewell.

(Exit with Citizens.)

POMPONIUS.

Fair words and soft, but like the babbling brook,
Not over deep, methinks.

LICINIUS.

He is of those

Who follow with the stream, and guides his course
By the full current's veering ; a light thing,
Whose talk is worth the noting, as it shows
Only—true weathercock—the changing wind.
But not so Fulvius, whom just now we named ;
He in his character, I fear, is fixed,
And that none of the wisest ; while so far
He has besotted the great mind of Gracchus
To think too kindly of him, that it thus
Doth much out-calculate his true desert.
'Tis oft a lofty spirit shows in this
The weakness of its temper, taking up
Through love of one of a far meaner soul,
Some high conception, which doth catch the stamp
And likeness of its own excelling virtues.
Of noble natures 'tis the practised fault,
Thus to mislead their judgments, to the thinking
Those whom they love as noble as themselves.
And thus his soul in keeping, Caius gives
To Fulvius, who by noisy blustering drags—
And by his plottings and dissentious riot—
Unkind suspicion on the name of Gracchus.

POMPONIUS.

But you're too hard on Fulvius. There's no proof
That he has tampered with the states, nor been
The cause of this disturbance.

LICINIUS.

No,—no proof ;

But there's suspicion rank, and his demeanor
With loud and quarrelsome debate, doth give
Much strength to rumor. Were't not for the love
That Gracchus bears him, there had been a search
Of close inspection, when great Scipio died,
And all men whispered "poison." Many then
On Fulvius cast suspicion's clouded eye ;
But he was Gracchus' friend. This was the claim
That made his evil sacred. The great love
That from the city's heart flowed out on Gracchus
Hushed up the loud-mouthed vengeance. But there was
In this heart-homage even, a dark taint
Upon the name of Gracchus, which was joined
With that of Fulvius, while men whispered low,
Casting uneasy glances, as though thought,
Fearing to speak, yet could not hush itself—
Longed to find words, yet doubting trembled still
To think those words o'erheard. While no man dared
To boldly name a guilt, yet all seemed stunned,
As wildered by some dark imagining.
O'er Gracchus fell the shadow of a shame,
Whilst he, for love of Fulvius, dared not stand
To boldly face inquiry, and cast off
The sickly taint of that day's damnd work.—

COMPOSITE.

Would it had never been ! For Drusus now,
The Senate's tool and their most vigilant spy,
Makes this the point, whence all his venom casts
Its evil spite on Gracchus. 'Tis a lever,
Which, though it lies all rusted by disuse,
From its forgotten corner now he drags,
To work his mischief. Still I have a kindness
That clings to Fulvius. Had you heard him lash
This very Drusus, when he wagged his tongue
In evil words to raise the citizens
'Gainst the return of Gracchus, you'd have felt
With all his noisy faults, he has a heart,
And that belongs to Gracchus.

LICINIUS.

I yet doubt it.

ACT II.

*SCENE I.—Street of Rome.**Septimulieus and crowd of Citizens.*

SEPTIMULIEUS.

I knew it ! bless the Gods ! We're almost now
Upon the ladder's top. The people's voice
Will hoist up Gracchus ! Then, good luck, his friends !

FIRST CITIZEN.

Spite of the Senate they will make him tribune.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Ay ; to be sure they will ! and he will make
A glorious tribune too ! Pray ye, remember
I've always been his friend. No shuffler, I,
To catch the passing time. I've ever kept
My service in his cause, and I know too,
He notes my merits kindly.

Enter Fulvius.

FULVIUS.

Huzza, boys !

The votes are counted. Gracchus is our tribune !
Huzza for Caius Gracchus !

CITIZENS.

Huzza ! huzza !

SEPTIMULIUS.

I told you so ! I'm one of his best friends !

Huzza for Caius Gracchus !

FIRST CITIZEN.

Now we've got

A tribune who, as cunningly as need be,
May pose the law against your Livius Drusus.

FULVIUS.

Ay, let our lordly rulers champ the bit
And fret their hearts out ; 'tis not like that Gracchus
Will abdicate the tribuneship to please them.
He's fairly mounted and he'll ride them down.
'Twill do me good to see the proud patrician
Bending beneath the spur, plunging and foaming,
Like high-bred courser vaulting from the will
Of who would ride him ; forced again to crouch,
Groaning in mingled rage and agony,
Till whip and spur at last have done their work,
And the proud blood is tamed to bow its neck,
Offering its head to meet the ready rein
Which leads him to his task.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Bravely we did

Our duty, did we not, in the election ?

FULVIUS.

Bravely you did, and well. Before your might
Like a scared thing, the startled Senate shrank.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Now let's away to drink our tribune's health.

FIRST CITIZEN.

No, no. You know that Gracchus said we should
Be orderly, and that the people showed—
These were his words—"most nobly when they spoke
With calm decision and with majesty
The nation's voice ; and that each citizen
Should as a fraction of the breathing whole
Maintain in him his country's dignity."
So let us all go home, and have no noise.

FULVIUS.

Pooh ! pooh ! 'Twas for the Senate Gracchus spoke.

SECOND CITIZEN.

He said the people, though.

FULVIUS.

Well, I know that.

But, simpleton, his words were meant to move
The Senate's ears, not yours. 'Twas but a flourish.

FIRST CITIZEN.

And yet, I thought the words were from his heart ;
And more than that, I found a judgment in them.

We citizens are too much given in truth
To drunkenness and riot.

FULVIUS.

Bah ! good sheep !
Would you too turn philosopher ? Be off !
And if you like, get drunk. Why should he curb
(Gracchus is far too wise a man for that)
Of their poor pleasures, the vexed citizens ?

THIRD CITIZEN.

Come ; Fulvius ought to know ; he's Gracchus' friend,
And has a heart too, for the people's cause.
He knows the right, I'm sure, better than we.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—House of Cornelia.

Licina, Cornelia, and Licinius.

LICINIA.

Come, tell us all about it. Pray, Licinius,
Be not so chary of your words. My mother,
Though she says little, loves as well as I
To hear you talk of Gracchus. 'Twas, they say,
The greatest crowd that ever was in Rome,
And we know well, that all the Senate's power
Was listed to oppose him.

LICINIUS.

Lady, yes.

But 'gainst their combined force, backed as it was
By most obsequious bribery and corruption,
The stream of life came pouring into Rome,
As though, the being of the state in danger,
Its life-blood all came rushing to the heart
To keep existence in. And boldly did

The general pulse beat forth new-given life.

'Twas a new Rome, as through its crowded ways

The swaying populace bent on its course,

And o'er the Campus Martius sweeping, showed

In its flood-tide, a human ocean rising,

The murmuring of whose restless waves spoke out

Oppression's death. Your husband, noble lady,

And your proud son, Cornelia, through its midst

Passed stately on ; the people's voices claiming

Not as a favor done him, but a due

Owed to themselves and Rome. And boldly they

To the call responded. From their bending rafters

The house-tops even, straining 'neath the weight

Of gathered thousands, echoed back the name

As spoke the people's voice, " Gracchus for Tribune."

CORNELIA.

Then it was nobly done ! No need was there

To cringing beg a flattered people's voice.

LICINIUS.

No ; rather even then, when he did ask
Their voices from them, firmest he rebuked.
But gently 'twas, with nobleness, as would
The follies of his child a parent check.
And still, meseemed, at each rebuke, they thronged
More loving close around him.

CORNELIA.

Gods ! I thank ye,
For that his spirit lags not in the race
Of its youth's glorious promise. Here he comes.
We'll go and greet our tribune to his home.
(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE III.—*Street of Rome.*

Opimius, Lucullus, another Senator, and Livius Drusus.

LUCULLUS.

We're beaten to our trenches, and we fight
Now for existence.

SENATOR.

We must back a step.

LUCULLUS.

Give back and we are lost.—Our enemy

Will scarce with one step only let us pause ;
But back, and back, and back, will hustle us,
Till his position he at will may choose.

OPIMIUS.

He's liké to choose it, act howe'er we may ;
And yet with you I say, we must not back ;
'Tis certain ruin. You must help us, Drusus.

DRUSUS.

Nay, I have tried my best. The people's will
Outdoes your plottings. I'm almost ashamed
That with them I too am not striving.

OPIMIUS.

Pshaw !

Where's your ambition which would crush down Gracchus
And make yourself (what you to aspire have right
At least as full as he) Rome's one great man !
Have you so soon renounced the noble task,
That you already shirk its burden off ?
And more, do you forget the benefit
That in this duty's exercise, accrues
To your own person and your properties ?
Your fortune will be made, e'en with the blow
That drives away these hungry blood-suckers.
Monies and lands a grateful Senate gives
To who thus nobly props his country's cause.

DRUSUS.

In truth the Senate doth with liberal hand

Dispense its favors, and although the mob
Doth cavil at the freedom of the gifts
Its generosity dispenses to me,
My conscience clears me ; and I must confess
Too hungry grasping is this eager mob ;
An humbler deportment it should bear ;
And while I love the people, I must side
Thus far with noble Senators. I'll do
What in me lies, to crush the spirit out
From this proud faction. Honesty doth point
As well as interest to the quelling it.

OPIMIUS.

Most certainly ; and common sense doth prove
There's honesty in interest. Shall I starve
Or live a beggar because chance hath put
What should be mine in food and property
Into another's hand ? Most surely not ;
For thus defrauding self and wife and children
Is it not greater sin, than if I drain
The stranger's surplus off ? I much misdoubt
This ever-prosing honesty that leaves
On homely pulse its advocate to starve,
To rear in rags his children up, while thrusting
By way of comfort down their hungry throats
Old saws and adages, importing still
That honesty is the best policy.
'Tis a fine lesson for who'll act it out ;

Though, truth to say, I've found it ever was
A glorious virtue to grow lean upon,
And apt excuse for lazy ne'er-do-wells
To trap their misery in.— (*Noise without.*)

What tumult's this ?

SENATOR.

It is the crowd whom Fulvius feeds with drink
And tops them to the height of all their whims.
I have a hope to see this Fulvius prove
The doubtful spoke, where Gracchus' wheel shall crack.
A rotten prop at heart, which must give way
When most the pressure of the time shall need it.
Hark ! How they join his name with that of Gracchus,
Twin-brothers in their hearts.
(*Noise approaches, with cries of Gracchus, Fulvius, &c.*)

DRUSUS.

They come this way ;
'Twere best I should pass on. 'Tis fault to them
That I too much frequent the company
Of honorable Senators. I'll go.
Though pure my purposes, most prudent 'twere
I should not meet them here. (*Exit Drusus.*)

OPIMIUS.

Ay ; go thy ways
To salve thy conscience for the job on hand,
And into love with meanness cheat thy thought.
Bah ! It is rank, and his offence's foulness

Doth cast its filth upon ourselves who use it.
Would we were rid of the necessity !
The rotten thing doth haunt me with its stench.
But what means this ?

(Enter Citizens, riotously and drunken.)

How now ! What would ye here ?
And whence this loud uncivil conduct ? Come ye
By Gracchus sent, to edify the town
With beastly scenes of drunken merriment ?

FIRST CITIZEN *(drunk.)*

Please your honorable senatorships, we would——

OPIMIUS.

Ye would,—vile things ! What care we what ye would !
Ye refuse of the city, foul excrescence
Upon a sickly growth ! Is it for ye
We are so bandied by this Gracchus ? Off !
If ye will play the beast, go shut ye up
In your own houses, tumble as ye will ;
Get drunk and beat your wives ; be hogs at home,
Ye drudges, it is all that ye are fit for !
But if your sovereign majesties would spare
Such exhibitions in the public streets,
Meseems to hide them were some point of wisdom.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Will't please your lordships hear us ?

OPIMIUS.

Hear ye ! No.

But rid the soilèd streets of your foul tread,
And for the purer air you'd leave, we'll thank you.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Would you the right of citizens deny us ?

OPIMIUS.

Ye citizens, in troth !—Be off, vile spawn !
Ye refuse scum of a licentious city !
Your breaths do load the air. Be off ! I say.

FIRST CITIZEN.

We'd better go. They have small patience with us.
And truth to say, our addled brains are fit
But poorly for encounter with their wits.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.—*Another part of Rome.*

Enter Gracchus, Fulvius, and Licinius.

GRACCHUS.

But you are too unruly. You have schooled
The citizens to riot. When they should
By hardy temperance, steady perseverance,
Push on to their great end, you rouse them idly
To drinking and excess. Those powers of mind

Which to a resolute effort should be turned
You make them drown in license and debauch.

FULVIUS.

Why, one would think, you had not yet unlearned
Your school-boy lesson ; that you truly deemed
The popular majesty an enthroned thought,
And not a joke to gull the dirty crowd
And coax the votes from its high mightiness.

GRACCHUS.

You word it well ; an enthroned thought it is !
The might of mind, whose myriad streamlets meet,
One gathered flood of condensed light to form.
Each dirty rivulet its ripple brings,
Which in the sweeping current mingling, drops
Its dust and dross. Its purer part goes on,
And on, and on,—until at last the whole,
By the great alchemy of reason, flows
Pure as it must be, from its origin.
Thought sprang from God, and all bestained with earth.
Struggling and creeping still, at last the truth
Is forced upon the day. The world's great mind
Though stumbling oft in error, must at last
Work out its vexèd problem, and perfection
Wrought from reflected deity in man,
Burst sun-like from the mist of error forth.

FULVIUS.

Strange pantheon this our mottled world, in sooth,

Of embryo deities ? At a cheap rate
You make your Gods, and their divinityships
Do trick themselves as easily in wisdom
Picked up, 'twould seem, in filth and public gutters.
Yon drunken blackguard, rolling in the dust,
And yonder snub-nosed, wide-mouthed, gaping crowd,
With their shag-heads, and vacant staring eyes,
Are these the exponents of your godlike thought ?

GRACCHUS.

These, even these, are men ; and I could weep
To see their nobler natures thus debased.
It is the sin of those who, better knowing,
Do dam the stream, instead of cutting out
A clearer course to give its current way.
If yours the better mind, its effort turn
To raise, not crush them lower in their mire.

FULVIUS.

I must be off, or you till midnight preach,
And their divinityships, the citizens
Whom you to-day address, will take it ill,
If you are hoarse, and thence not eloquent.
Farewell ! may all the Gods shower blessings on you.
(*Exit Fulvius.*)

LICINIUS.

You waste your teaching on a heart like that.

GRACCHUS.

The heart is good. The head in truth sometimes,

For want of thought to steady it, doth wander
On bootless errands. 'Twill correct itself.

LICINIUS.

The heart is sapless ; rotten at the core,
And the head weakened by its selfishness.
From head and heart alike, great thoughts are born ;
The truly noble cannot sever them.
I'd shun the man, who at his nature scoffs,
And trampling on his own divinity
Feels not the *consciousness* of human greatness.
Forgive me, that, but dealing in few words,
In honest sooth I'd warn you,—shun this Fulvius.

GRACCHUS.

He is my friend. I'll hear no ill of him.

LICINIUS.

Gracchus, it cannot be, a mind like yours
Should fail to fathom such a shallow thing
As this same Fulvius. Pray you——

GRACCHUS.

Pray you, cease,
Nor stun me with unwelcome counsellings.

LICINIUS.

But one word, only !

GRACCHUS.

What ! You'd quarrel, would you ?
Who underrates my friend, doth carp at me.

LICINIUS.

Would it were only at yourself I carped,
For then you'd listen patiently ; but here—
Well, well ; I've done. Your frown speaks stinted patience,
And anger listens to no argument. *(Exeunt.)*

*SCENE V.—House of Cornelia.**Cornelia and Licinia.*

LICINIA.

Mother, I'm sick with fear, and mad to see
Your brow so calm, while every heart-throb bursts
My breast with expectation. There are plots
And underhanded counsellings ; glances dark
And sidelong whispers, of I know not what.
I fear me much, there's something wrong of late.
Caius seems wrapt and moody in his thought ;
And when I question him, he answers short
With matters of no moment ; how he hears
This neighbor's bitch has puppi'd ; or belike
This other's cow has sickened in her horn ;
And how the corn hath musted in the ear
And harvest should be coming. These are not

The thoughts which wrench his anxious heart in twain,
And rob me of its larger moiety.

CORNELIA.

Poor child! You have not hardness for the time,
And run to meet your sorrows,—hugging them
Like cherished visitors. I know not what
The unquiet face of Rome doth indicate.
We can but watch the struggle.

LICINIA.

Mother, no;
We can do more; much more. Remember, mother,
How you have lost one son. You've often wept
And told the story to me of his fate.
Oh mother! save this last one! Keep him close
As jewel on your heart. Watch over him
Like unweaned infant nestling at your breast!

CORNELIA.

Daughter, we can but wait until we find
What darkens in the cloud which overhangs us.
We know not if ambition stocks it full
Big with black mischief, or if nobler worth
But works its virtuous ends through shaded ways.

LICINIA.

We know there's risk in it. This is enough.
Then mother, stop your son! Oh! hold him back!
By all the throes that brought him into being,
By all the hopes and fears that watched his growth,

By all the pangs that even now I know
Must rend your mother-heart to think of him,
Oh! save him to that heart! Save him to me!

CORNELIA.

Daughter, to guide his course is not for me;
Complete he stands, and in full manhood strong.
No more my task his pliant youth to mould;
Himself the drama of his life must make.
But of his course, believe me, dear, could I,
By the deep aspirations of my heart
Its unsketched outlines fix—the struggle come
'Twixt life and honor—I would bid him die.
What though the effort burst my mother-heart!
When virtue's weighed 'gainst vice, good men must die
To throw their lives in the balance.

LICINIA.

Mother! mother!

You fright me with this passion! Not for nothing
Did Etna late her baleful fires cast
Ominous of evil. Trembling Sicily
To her foundations shaken, saw huge flames
Burst from the bosom even of the sea;
While the big waters swallowed up her coast
In hungry menace of some coming ill,
And subterranean mutterings spoke of woes
Unmeasured and unknown! They come, and dark
Their scowling shadows fright me.

CORNELIA.

But, why thus

Trick out imagined ills in giant form
And ghastly robe with terrors ! Thus we act
Like foolish children, whispering goblin tales
Until on end their bristled hair stands up,
And in the unnatural sound of their cramped breaths,
They fancy whispering spirits at their backs,
Strange steps in the loud beating of their hearts,
And in their garments rustling some wild blast
Of unimagined horror ! Come, my girl,
Cheer up, and be to Caius, if you can,
A friend who loves his life less truly far
Than his unsmerchèd honor.

LICINIA.

I will try ;

But mother, 'tis a lesson sad to con,
And young am I to learn it. (*Enter Gracchus.*)

Gracchus ! Ah !

My heart's best life !

GRACCHUS.

What ! weeping, sweet one ! fie !

Your eyes are full of tears ; you have not wrung
The baby yet from out their stained lids.

LICINIA.

Treat me then as a woman, and I'll try
To hush the baby in me. Tell me what

Works in your mind to make you almost shun me ?
And why I see you ever with such look
Of grave abstraction ? Why you whispering start
When suddenly I meet you with your friends,
As though my presence jarred you ? And that Fulvius
Who haunts your company, I love him not ;
What have you still to do, whispering with Fulvius ?

GRACCHUS.

Pooh ! pooh ! a jealousy you have of Fulvius ;
Some grudge of the young bride, yet unforgiven.
He made me frolic once too late of night,
When you, the pretty tyrant of my house,
A new-made wife (some se'nnight old) sat watching
And deemed my duty cold. Forgive him, love !
We'll lecture him to greater gravity.

LICINIA.

It is not *that* which frets me, and you know it.
There's mischief in the wind. What is it, Gracchus ?

GRACCHUS.

A mischief, say you ? Ah ! belike the storm
Has scattered mother Tyra's brood of chicks.
Poor soul, I passed her at her post this morning,
Cluck, clucking on, as she herself had been
The very hen that hatched them.

LICINIA.

Gracchus ! Gracchus !

You'll break my heart, and yet I needs must laugh
To hear your folly.

GRACCHUS.

Laugh then, sweet ; 'tis best.
That rainbow face is pretty.—Is't not, mother ?
Forgive me, though, I am in haste ; pray, mother,
The gown you fitted for me yesterday ;
I must be off again.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE VI.—*Public Square.*

Crowd of noisy Citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN.

He must come presently. Would I could meet him
With clearer conscience. On last night's misdeeds
My aching head an ugly sermon preaches.
Of Fulvius I scarce know what we should think.
They say he's Gracchus' friend, but certainly
Their lessons oft run counter.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Truly, he helps
To make sad fools of us. Here Gracchus comes.

FIRST CITIZEN.

I wish yon drunken crowd would hush its riot.

Enter Gracchus.

(Great cheering and much drunken noise among Citizens.)

GRACCHUS.

Be still and hear me. You who've drugged your brains
Until their surfeit doth of mind and thought
Exclude the entrance quite,—get home,—sleep off
This self-taught idiocy. Be men again
Before ye come to prate of governing
A people's councils. Your own vices lash,
Lay bare your consciences,—starve them to reason,
And then you may be heard. Your voices now
Are but the idiot's babbling, madman's yell !
Ay, cower,—shrink away ; ye are no things
To keep men company. Yourselves have cast
In wantonness your noble birthrights from ye !

(Many citizens steal away.)

Friends, brothers, Roman citizens, I come
As ye have willed it, that I may explain
And speak to you concerning your own rights.
Man has in every station, rights his due.
Our slaves look to their masters for support.
The very claims we hold upon their labor
Make us a rule to tender them again
What comforts we can furnish to their lot.
If placed by circumstance, necessity,
Beneath our rule, protection thence we owe,—
And he evading basely these, degrades

Himself below the thus defrauded slave. ✓
You, Romans, have a sterner government ;
For our rich nobles, who do make themselves
Perforce the country's purse-holders, forget
To leave some portion of your gains for you
Whose toil and heart-ache won them. Are ye poor ?
Why do your starving infants beg in vain
A hard, dry crust ? Why are their shivering limbs
Wrapt but in rags, as they cower tearful round
The dying embers of your empty hearths ?
Are there no vacant lands, the people's due ?
Where are the rich fields that your fathers conquered ?
And where the exuberant harvests that yourselves
Have made Rome's property ? What justice gave them
New riches to the rich ? The proud patrician
Who toiled not, bled not, in the gaining them ;
Who sat at home by the fire and warmed himself
By talking over battles that *you* fought ;
He waited for no law to make them his ;
But by the strong hand of oppression seizes
The bread which should have fed your hungry babes.
Is there no corn in the market ? You will find
A large abundance. There have lately been
New importations from the provinces.
Why do you starve, then ? Why do you not buy ?
You smile as though the bare idea were strange.
You cannot buy. You have no monies. Rich,

Usurious, speculates the plunderer
On your starvation. Beggars which you are
His robberies make you, and he taunts you then,
Mocking your poverty by this display,
Showing how rich the country is in grain,
While he from hunger-clenchèd fingers, screws
To pay for a mere handful, your last doir !
With poverty your chilling bed-fellow,
And hugged by hunger, while ye thus are driven
To wrap ye in your rags and wait for death,
Who are those laborers, well-dressed, happy, sleek,
Tilling the fields which, citizens, are yours ?
From the depopulated country fly
The shepherd and the husbandman, to make
Room for the rich man's slave. Beasts have their dens,
They hide them in their caves, and there may rest ;
But you, who in the cause of Italy
Your heart's-blood spill, ye Roman citizens—
To you she gives no home ! She leaves you nought
Save only God's light and the air you breathe !
The poor man has no home ; he claims no shed
'Neath which his huddling brats may gather them.
From place to place the forlorn things he drags
And with their mother lays them on the earth
There, where the soldier sleeps. What mockery then,
To call on such, ye generals of Rome,
And bid them fight for their domestic Gods,

Their homes and sepulchres ! *Their* sepulchres !
Their fathers' bones are scattered to the winds
And the patrician ploughs them through his fields,
Nor heeds plebeian graves ! And yet they fight ;
Plebeians fight and die. The Roman blood
Boils up in the combat and the victory's won,
For what ? That these proud rich may sit and revel
In some new luxury, some dear-bought pleasure,
While you, ye so-called masters of the world,
In your possession hold no foot of ground !
To your assistance you have summoned me ;
And where the anxious thought you dared not word,
Your walls speak to me. Public monuments
In blotted and scrawled sentences implore
Succor to Rome. Dare ye then help yourselves ?
On you I call, to make your effort too.
What can my single power ? The slough is deep ;
We must if we would pass, unite our strength ;
With shoulder to the wheel, and a great heart
Of resolute effort, we must bring the force
Of a whole people's thought, a nation's might.
And when a nation acts, if 'twould not end
Its struggling cause in anarchy and license,
With calm endurance every citizen
Should feel the weight of the whole cause is his.
Rise to your task ! Upon your souls let in
The light of reason. From the agglomerate crowd

Spring forth to life as individual men,
Conquering the world within yourselves, ere grasping
To rule the external. Be self-conscious, bold,
But never violent. Though firm, yet curbing
Your passion's fierceness to due energy.
Your cause is just, and in its justice strong.
Make it not weak by tumult, angry riot,
Obstreperous threat, and vulgar, wordy menace.
Let reason, based on conscious truth, be backed
By resolution firm, and stubborn will,
With all its nerves strong knitted to endure.
If these the temper of your striving souls,
Then let us on. The trial lies before us.
But much I fear that ye will flinch the struggle.
There was a noble heart which throbbed to free
This trampled people to its natural rights ;
And how were its bold efforts seconded ?
Ye called on him for succor, as ye now
Call for my feeble help. Ye called, implored,
Entreated him,—and then, and then,—your blushes
May speak the tragedy, whose damning stain
Doth stamp upon your annals its dark blot !
What need I name that name, whose syllables
Each, in its separate wording, should call forth
A newer vengeance on the coward hearts
That shrank in danger from him ! Ye know well
I speak to you of Tiberius. He who strove

With you, and for you, in the noble cause
Of his true heart's devotion. Are ye, Romans,
The sons of those who starting flew to arms
When from a wanton insult to their tribune,
They by a foreign war wiped off the stain
Thus cast upon the country's majesty ?
They thought the doom of death fit punishment,
When failing in respect, Veturius stood
Heedless, nor making way before their tribune
Who in the forum passed him. But ye saw,
In your most awful consecrated temple—
The holy capitol of Rome—the blood
Of your own sacred magistrate defile
Its violated walls ; ye saw, nor shuddered ;
Or if ye shuddered at the sacrilege,
Ye stood and let his bloody corse be dragged
Like refuse carrion, through your city's streets.
Ye saw him, like a dead dog, tost in the waves
Of Tiber, which reluctant shrank, as fearing
To sanction crimes so horrible. 'Tis said
The naiads of the river rose that night,
And terrible forebodings mourning shrieked
Of misery to Rome, for such a deed.
Ye Gods avert the omen, and accept,
Ye angered deities, the sacrifice,
Which here I vow to make you, of my life,

In the great cause for which my brother bled ;
The cause of Rome, of liberty, and man !

FIRST CITIZEN.

Let us go home.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Shall we not cheer him ?

FIRST CITIZEN.

No.

Let us go home and con his lessons well ;
Tears and obedience are his homage due ;
Cheers are too boisterous.

(Exeunt.)

ACT III.

SCENE I.—House of Cornelia.

Cornelia and Gracchus.

GRACCHUS.

Wolves breed not lambs, nor can the lioness
Rear fawns among her litter. You but chide
The spirit, mother, which is born from you.

CORNELIA.

Curb it, my son ; and watch against ambition !
Half demon and half god, she oft misleads
With a bold face of virtue. I know well
The breath of discontent is loud in Rome ;
And a hoarse murmuring vengeance smoulders there
Against the tyrannous rule which, iron shod,
Doth trample out man's life. The crisis comes ;
But oh ! beware, my son, how you shall force it !

GRACCHUS.

Nay, let it come, that dreaded day of doom,
When by the audit of his cruel wrongs
Heaped by the rich oppressor on the crowd
Of struggling victims, he must stand condemned
To vomit forth the ill-got gains which gorge

His luxury to repletion. Let it come !
The world can sleep no longer. Reason wakes
To know man's rights, and forward progress points.

CORNELIA.

By reason led, and peaceful wisdom nursed,
All progress is for good. But the deep curse
Of bleeding nations follows in the track
Of mad ambition, which doth cheat itself
To find a glory in its lust of rule ;
Which piling private ill on public wrong,
Beneath the garb of patriotism hides : "
Its large-mawed cravings ; and would thoughtless plunge
To every change, however riot waits,
With feud intestine, by mad uproar driven,
And red-eyed murder, to reproach the deed.
Death in its direst forms doth wait on such.

GRACCHUS.

Man lives to die, and there's no better way
To let the shackled spirit find its freedom
Than in a glorious combat 'gainst oppression.
I would not grudge the breath lost in the struggle.

CORNELIA.

Nor I, when duty calls. I am content,
May but my son prove worthy of the crisis ;
Not shrinking from the trial, nor yet leaping
Beyond the marked outline of licensed right ;
Curbing his passions to his duty's rule ;

Giving his country all,—life, fortune, fame,
And only clutching back, with miser's care,
His all untainted honor. But take heed !
The world doth set itself on stilts, to wear
The countenance of some higher, better thing.
'Tis well to seek this wisely ; but with haste
Grasping too high, like child beyond its reach
It trips in the aspiring, and thus falls
To lowlier condition. Rashness drags
Remorse and darkest evil in her train.
Pause, ere the cry of suffering pleads to Heaven
Against this fearful mockery of right ;
This license wild, which smothers liberty
While feigning to embrace it.

GRACCHUS.

Thought fantastic
Doth drapery evil thus with unsketched ills.
No heart-sick maid, nor dream-struck boy am I
To scare myself with these. There's that in man
Doth long to rise by nature. Ever he
Crouching in lethargy, doth wrong himself.

CORNELIA.

Most true and more. I reverence human mind ;
And with a mingled love and pride I kneel
To nature's inborn majesty in man.
But as I reverence, therefore would I lend
My feeble aid, this mighty power to lead

To its true aim and end. Most often 'tis
When crowds do wander wide of right, and fall
To foul misuse of highest purposes,
The madness of their leaders drags them on.
I would not check aspiring, justly poised;
But rather bid you "on,"—where light is clear
And your track plainly marked. I scorn the slang
Of "greedy populace," and "dirty crowd,"
Nor slander thus the nature which I bear.
Men in the aggregate not therefore cease
Still to be men; and where untaught they fall,
It is a noble duty, to awake
The heart of truth, that slumbers in them still.
It is a glorious right to rouse the soul,
The reasoning heart that in a nation sleeps!
And Wisdom is a laggard at her task
When but in closet speculations toiling
She doth forget to share her thought abroad
And make mankind her heir.

GRACCHUS (*looking towards the street.*)

Ah! Fulvius comes.

CORNELIA.

Your evil ghost doth haunt you in the form
Of this same factious citizen, who errs
From no bold error which outstrips the right,
(And thus misleads oft by exaggerate good,)

But, selfish to the core, he counts the worth
E'en of his madness.

GRACCHUS.

Mother, you are harsh.

But I've no time to battle in his cause.

Forgive my haste. I've business which must make

My best excuse for lack of courtesy.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE II.—House of Opimius.

Opimius and Drusus.

OPIMIUS.

Enough, I say, of this vile, canting folly !
From its endurance out beyond the verge
You push my fretted patience. Leap at once !
Into it, man ! Speak out ;—what is your price ?
We'll pay you what you will, so you will rid us
Of this bold demagogue. Speak, hungry leech !
Come, we are private. Something chokes you. Gulp it.
Your honesty I'll not betray, nor tell
The secret to your compeers, by what star
You trace your windings. But one thing you see—
I know you ; so leave off your shuffling ; speak,
And speak out boldly. What's your will ? your price ?

DRUSUS.

But you, too quick, at nothing fire up.
I tried to think, if it were best for Rome——

OPIMIUS.

Pshaw! pshaw! man! Let Rome be. We'll talk of her
When you'll have settled all your own affairs.
What think you of the fine Sardinian fields,
Or Agathyrnum garden? Lycia has
Groves too, luxuriant, where her saffron grows.
Come, courage, man! plunge to the crumb o' the loaf,
Nor stand like hungry mouse, nibbling his crust
The while he eyes some well-stocked larder's store
Where longing dares not enter. What's your will?

DRUSUS.

Nay, if your generous liberality
My honest zeal sees fit to compensate,
With thanks I'll take the rich Sardinian field
And Agathyrnum garden.

OPIMIUS.

What—*both*, man!

Thy maw is large,—the swallowing chokes thee not.
But we've no time to chaffer. Mind our bargain!
Gracchus to Carthage,—or the fields of Drusus
Must seek some other tenant. (*Enter Lucullus.*)

Ha! Lucullus,

Well met. Our wise good friend,—our honest Drusus,—
This worthy benefactor of his country,

Agrees with us, that for the destined plan
Of colonizing Carthage, there is none
So fit as Caius Gracchus, and doth promise
To so bestir himself that he will make
The post fall to his lot. Good man ! he sees
(Moved by considerations of much weight)
How hangs the city's weal upon our plans.
(*To Drusus.*)

Good-day, my worthy friend ; I see you're off.
(*Exit Drusus.*)

LUCULLUS.

It would have saved us many an aching head
Of wearing thought, and anxious watchfulness,
If we a nest had sooner found to lodge him.
To think is fearful, over all the laws
With which his influence has already checked
And bounded in the Senate's shackled power.
In every thing he does, the people praise him ;
And truth to say, were it not Caius Gracchus,
My thought would fix him honest. He so strongly
Doth dwell upon the majesty of Rome,
Whate'er the under-current of his feeling,
It shows most fairly. Where he even finds
His bitterest foes, within the Senate's heart,
He to a noble line of duty works them.
It was a wise and moderate decree
That he, for instance, argued them to pass

About the corn that our proprætor Fabius
Sent us from Spain. Most needed too it was,
As antidote to angered feelings roused
By Fabius' tyranny throughout the province.
I wish the thought had come from any man
Sooner than Caius Gracchus. 'Tis a stamp
Of new-coined honor to him,—a fresh feather
To deck his plumèd cap. But what's the good
From this short banishment we can expect ?

OPIMIUS.

Drusus is schooled and ready (curse the fate
That needs me tamper with so foul a thing !)
To make the most of his absence. He'll propose
Some petted laws, the people's love to coax.
Or rather (for they have no thought to love)
To catch the popular voice which drowns itself
With its own echoes often. Thus we'll soothe
And flattering choke with their own wish the crowd,
The turbulent throat of its loud worship hushing
That ever follows Gracchus ; and the idol
Thus undermining from his pedestal,
The fickle homage of the people bring
To this our man of wax,—nice-moulded thing—
That we must prop on Gracchus' vacant stool.

LUCULLUS.

He has a law they say, that strikes us home

Closer than any yet, and in the Forum
He will propose it presently.

OPIMIUS.

I've heard
Much talk of it ; and we I fear must stand
To witness one more triumph. May it be
At least his last.

SCENE III.—Street of Rome near Forum.

Enter Pomponius and Licinius.

POMPONIUS.

On ! We've no time to lose. I fear already
We've lost the argument. In all due form
Before I left was every right discharged.
By the presiding tribune prayer was said,
The business noted, and the herald read
The law which was proposed. A noble one !
Associate with the Senate it would give us
Three hundred knights to share the authority
Of our judicial courts. Quick, let us in.

SCENE IV.—*Forum.*

Assembled People, Licinius, Lucullus, Pomponius, &c.
Gracchus is addressing the Assembly.

GRACCHUS.

You've heard the law proposed. You've heard my
colleague

Declaim against it in no measured terms.

Branded you've heard it by our noble consul

As most licentious, revolutionary.

Citizens, to you I turn.

(Turns his face towards the Forum.)

OPIMIUS *(aside to Lucullus.)*

Do you mark that?

LUCULLUS.

'Tis clap-trap cunning, which will take the people.

GRACCHUS.

To you I speak, the country's pulse and life;

Ye are Rome's masters,—her true governors

At once, and truest servants. 'Neath those shreds

The ragged emblems of your poverty,

And parti-colored badges of your rank,

Beats the great heart of Rome. This law is made

Not for convenience to the cradled rich,

Who, wrapped luxurious in the dainty folds

Of purple robes, and on their downy cushions

By sweetest music lulled, now frightened start
At the harsh tones I utter ; it is made
For your necessities, ye struggling poor ;
Judge *ye* then, of its merits.—If it be,
As says our consul, revolutionary,
I do deny that it can be licentious.
Your courts of law I would not make less strict,
Nor from the doom inherited by vice
One hair's weight would I take. I would but give *ye*
Judges who in their duty read their law.
I would, at least in part, snatch frightened Justice
From bold Corruption's lucre-stained hand.
Who have *ye* now for judges ? Who but those
The enthroned rich ? Of all our natural rights
The bitterest foes ! The Senate is your judge ;
At once aggressor proud, and vengeful tyrant.
Where then is your appeal ? Your refuge,—where ?
Romans, the fathers of this Senate were
Rome's noblest citizens ; the country's prop,
And every way her boast. They won them rights,
From which, with all their vices, still their sons
Ought not to be cast down. Leave them the dues
Their Fathers' virtues won. Revere in them
The noble legacy of by-gone deeds ;
But rouse *ye* 'neath oppression ! See *ye* not
How with slow step and guarded look she comes ;
Oft pausing ; watching opportunities ;

Doubtful advancing ; seizing timidly
Some right disputed ; till, now bolder grown,
With fearless stride, and open face of guilt,
She grasps at what she wills, nor feigns to hide
Her bold aggressions beneath justice' sham.
Corruption seizes with her myrmidons,
And every avenue to justice blocks.

I have proposed, that with our Senators
An equal number of associate knights
Should now be added in authority
To judge all causes. Why the loud outcry
Indignant raised against me ? 'Tis that thus
Our Senate feels the people has some voice,
Dictating its own councils ; that the law,
Half wrested from that class which has no heart,
Nor with you, nor yet for you, may be spoken
Thus, through another court. Decide ye now ;
To you, from that high Senate, I appeal,
Ye poor,—ye suffering,—ye sorrow-taught,—
Ye crowd of trampled men, with souls as high,
And blood as red, as those who trample ye !
Because ye are plebeians, nor can boast
The blood of twenty fathers, have ye less
The rights of Romans and of citizens ?
Plebeians have done noble acts in Rome,
And stamped in lines of blood some glorious deeds
Upon our country's annals. Have ye heard,

Or has the Senate bade ye blot it out
From Roman memories ? Have ye forgot
That once, twice, thrice, Rome saw her battles turned,
Appeased her angry Gods, and victory snatched
From enemies already triumphing ?
Three generations to the Decii owed
Their rescued safety. Curius, from our coasts
Who drove the Epyran Pyrrhus,—and to tempt him,
When, from his earthen pot and frugal meal
Of garden vegetables, he was offered
The gold and luxuries of conquered Samnites,
Turned smiling from them, telling them to learn
That but an added lustre was the stamp
Of poverty, to who by virtue governed—
Was not *his* too this scorned plebeian blood ?
I will not shame you, by recounting farther
The noble deeds that every child should know ;
Your hearts will count them for me. But one more,
And that my noble brother, I will name.
I thank my mother that she gave me not
For father, an Egyptian Ptolemy ;
But from the offers of a kingdom turning,
Gave heart and hand to a plebeian Roman,
And son and brother to a Gracchus made me.

Are there of us, Plebeians, those whose gains,
By honest hoarding, prosperous adventure,
Among the richer class give them a place,

And who would spurn the poor, to rank themselves
By flattering adulation of the great ?
Oh ! learn ye that there is no higher place
Than that from which the self-ennobled turns
A helping hand to lend to who would rise
Like him from abjectness.

Are there would sell

For dirty gold and for patrician hire,
The city's rights ? Shame them, if such there be,
Ye nobler hearts, in your coarse woven gowns ;
E'en midst their ill-got luxuries, and their robes
Of showier texture, shame them with the sight
Of poverty, which is too proud to take
The price of virtue !

Romans, I leave you now
To answer for yourselves, and by your voices
Decide your fate. Speak out, Freeman, or Slaves !
Ay, more, ay, worse than slaves ; outcasts and beggared,
The crouching suppliants to a lawless rule.

One word to you, ye noble Senators ;
Though ye misdoubt me, as a friend I speak,
Of Rome and of no party. Conscript fathers,
I plead to you, with filial duty bending,
As son to a harsh parent. Let us end
This so unnatural struggle. Be but just,
We ask no more. This quarrel once removed,
Our rights acknowledged, and our privileges

Laid open fairly, to the strengthening 'tis
At once of you and us. Some ill-got gains,
Some power unjustly grasped, once given o'er,
Proud in your aristocracy ye stand,
And to Rome sacred. Strong in property,
Strong in construction of our laws ye stand,
Strong in the people's love, and in opinion :
Strong in the association of great deeds ;
Strong in the immortal memory of the past.
Rome's history is yours, and is your fathers' !
The people love you for the names that grace
The glorious annals of our brightest years.
Oh ! cast not from you all the homage due,
Which now a nation stands prepared to pay !

I've done, and leave the question to the vote
Of you, our here assembled centuries.

PRESIDING MAGISTRATE (*rising.*)

According to your judgments, speak, Quirites.

(*The people commence separating into centuries
preparatory to giving their votes.*)

SCENE V.—*House of Cornelia.*

Cornelia and Licinia.

CORNELIA.

Well, who comes now, Licinia, that your eye
So often plays the truant to your work ?

LICINIA.

'Tis Fulvius with Licinius ; I will beckon
That they may tell us how the day has turned.

CORNELIA.

Do so. 'Tis like enough they have the news.

Enter Fulvius and Licinius.

FULVIUS.

Hurrah ! Let's have a bout ! But pray ye pardon ;
I had forgot myself, most gentle ladies.
And yet I wot, your best wine were poor pay
To greet such news as mine.

CORNELIA.

Well, give the news,
And you shall have the wine ; right good, forsooth ;
A true old bottle of the finest stamp.
(*Servants bring wine, &c.*)

How goes the day ?

FULVIUS.

A glorious victory !
The law is carried, and three hundred knights
Hold judgment now, as with the Senate equal.
A glass for that ; my news is thirsty, ladies,
And I must wash my throat, ere I go further.

LICINIA.

Nay, give the rest ; and you shall have full time
To drink your wine at leisure. Say, what next ?

FULVIUS.

What next ? Why next, the glorious people voted
That Caius should, from the equestrian class,
Himself make the selection, to fill up
This most important post. What think you, lady ?
A kiss of thanks from those same rosy lips
Would scarce be more than by their great deserts
The greasy rascals have a right to claim
Their honest guerdon. But again I see,
Lady, I'm trespassing. You blush reproof
Stronger than words can speak it. Pray forgive.

CORNELIA.

You're too rough, Fulvius. In your news I know not
If good or evil lurks.

FULVIUS.

Good ! *Glorious*, call it !

Gracchus, supreme in power, may govern Rome.
What shall we make of him ? We need but choose.
Consul ? Dictator ? Say, what shall it be ?

CORNELIA.

Nothing but Caius Gracchus and the friend
Of Rome, and of no party.

FULVIUS.

You are humble !

CORNELIA.

Humble ! My pride ne'er found a higher flight !
To see my son the greatest man in Rome

And wish him virtue to maintain his place !
Call you this humble ? 'Twere a grievous fall,
To have him barter for a foolish rank,
The glorious title of his country's friend !
But here he comes.

Enter Gracchus.

LICINIA.

Ah ! Gracchus, my heart's throne !

GRACCHUS.

My pretty bird, and my home's blessing thou !
Mother, you've got the news. Fulvius, I know,
Lags never, in the telling of what's strange.

LICINIUS.

And yet he has not told them what's more strange
Perhaps than all the rest. They have not heard
How you from the Comitium turned away
And from the Senate-house, to which their looks
Our orators in reverence always fix,
And to plebeian Rome dared word your speech ;
While frowning muttered the incensed patricians
Their unheard words of anger. 'Twas an act
Which must have weight, all simple though it seemed,
Through all Rome's history. The turning point
Betwixt patrician crushing tyranny,
And true plebeian freedom.

CORNELIA.

May it prove

But freedom, and not license !

GRACCHUS.

Nay, good mother,
What means your ominous word, chilling our hope !

CORNELIA.

I tremble at the spirit you have raised,
And anxious watch its full development.
Perchance a thing of light, Minerva armed,
Sprung from the teeming brow of deity ;
Perchance a demon foul to blast our eyes,
With fiendish horrors, and mad revelling,
Frighting off hope, to wither up our hearts.

GRACCHUS.

But mother, thus you'd fright off effort too,
And weaken thought with gazing on itself.
No victory is gained but meeting risk,
And no abuse, however wild the rage
To which may run unlicensed tyranny,
But should be better than the stagnant pool
Of abject brutishness, and cringing fear,
Misery unstruggling, and imbècile woe,
To which, 'neath the dominion, Rome drives fast
Of lawless aristocracy's abuse.
The madness into nature may be tamed ;
The spring, too strong at first, be tempered right,
The exigencies of its need to suit ;
But crouching idiocy, that 'neath the stripes
Of unchecked power, doth drivel out its last

Of crushed humanity, can only rise,
As doth the monster, beastlike from its lair,
To fury roused at last, but not to reason.

CORNELIA.

You argue well. And yet in purposes
Well reasoned even, oft to evil leads
Too rash precipitance. As half-spent torch
From a child's hand, the mighty forest fires,
Thus human passions, easily aroused,
Storm forth their angry blaze. The frightened thing
That waked the crashing storm, bewildered shrinks
From fierce destruction, in its raging might,
Which hissing, roars alternate, and doth gaze
In terror stupified, at its own work.
You drop the spark, but can you rule the flame
Of unchained passion's might ?

GRACCHUS.

I know not, mother.

But 'tis a thing to try.

CORNELIA.

Step coolly, then ;
With well directed foot of prudent caution.
Haste trips us in the race.

GRACCHUS.

My foot is in,
And I have boldly met the threatened risk.

FULVIUS.

Ay, more than boldly ; nobly ! Rome must make
New words to praise you.

GRACCHUS.

Pray you, praise me not.

I'd rather see my mother's clouded brow
In complacent approval smooth itself,
Than catch the flattery of crowds like you.
When the whole soul of energy is bent
To work some object that it needs must win,
Or find itself undone, no will it has
Of words to catch the windy flattery,
But in its conscious effort wrapped, it finds
So greedy for success, no thought nor taste,
To greet a smaller praise.

I had forgot

To tell you, mother, what annoys me much.
It seems, determined by some adverse luck,
I must be off to Carthage.

CORNELIA.

Ha ! indeed !

Thus evil chance doth work ; and yet, perhaps,
'Tis better thus. We'll talk of it again.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—*Carthage.**Workmen occupied in building.*

FIRST WORKMAN.

This Caius has a resolute heart, methinks,
Or from the start he would have given up.
With my good will, I'd not have struck one stroke
After the breaking of our standard staff.
It was an evil omen.

SECOND WORKMAN.

And far worse,
When by the winds our solemn sacrifice
Beyond the marks laid for the city's bounds
Was scattered borne, and when the howling wolves
With deafening clamor came, and carried off
The very marks themselves. It was a daring
Most manifest of outraged Heaven's will,
To persevere against such fearful omens.

FIRST WORKMAN.

And yet we have succeeded. It would seem
Some other way the Gods their warning meant.

THIRD WORKMAN.

For Gracchus' self, some say, it was intended.

FIRST WORKMAN.

And that is what I fear. I love so well
His noble heart,—almost, to ease him of it,
On my own shoulders I'd take all the risk.

SECOND WORKMAN.

Hush! do not be so foolhardy, to dare
The judgment of the Gods! I shudder thus
To hear you speak. Do you not see, there's that
Doth mark out Gracchus as one made for sorrow?
He is of those who bear upon their brow
The stamp of some sad doom.

FIRST WORKMAN.

And yet methinks

A noble brow it is.

SECOND WORKMAN.

Ay, oftenest thus

The noblest do the Gods mark out to bear
The sorrows of the world.

THIRD WORKMAN.

Stop! Here he comes.

Enter Gracchus and Messenger.

GRACCHUS.

An information, say you, against Fulvius?

MESSENGER.

Yes, sundry charges,—and in truth, no light ones.

'Tis likely to go hard with him, for Drusus
Gains ground in every way, and bears his power
In its full strength against him : while Opimius
Pampers at wish the now o'ergorged crowd,
Till with indulgence cloyed, the multitude,
Drunk with the surfeit of its palled desires,
Doth, as the boon of so much license, promise
The consulship in guerdon.

GRACCHUS.

Ha ! Opimius !

This doth need looking after. We will sail
With the first favouring wind. My duties here
Have prospered so, that they my present eye
No longer need. An hour or two, and then,
Some few directions to my workmen given,
I will be with you. *(Exeunt.)*

SCENE II.—*Street of Rome.*

Septimulieus and Citizens.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

I do not like at all the looks of things.
This information against Fulvius bodes
No good to Gracchus. It is certain, too,
That from the tribuneship he'll be turned out.

FIRST CITIZEN.

The people māy find means to hinder that.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

They can't! They can't! Opimius is a man
Will have his way. He's a great man; and I
Begin to think, an undue noise we've made.
And pother for this Gracchus.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Ha! I thought
You were no timeserver; his best of friends!

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Timeserver! surely not. But if a man
Is thick with faults, I've got an eye to see them.

FIRST CITIZEN.

And his bad luck doth make each fault a twin,
To who rates merit only by its gains.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Pshaw! you're a crabbed fellow! I care not
For further talk with you. But mark my words,
Gracchus has seen his last of the tribuneship.

SCENE III.—*Another part of Rome.*

Enter Gracchus and Licinius.

GRACCHUS.

Scarce have I set my foot in Rome, returned

From an accomplished business, which they hoped
Would keep me for a lifetime from her walls,
Than boldly shows their game. When was the time
That ever Roman consul dared to issue
Such proclamation as the Senate now
Has coaxed from Fannius? Citizens of Rome
Not born within her limits, must forthwith
The city's precincts leave! Chased like mad dogs!
Deprived at once of citizenship, forsooth!
Because the Senate cannot buy their votes.

Enter Drusus and another Tribune.

DRUSUS. ●

Gracchus, good-day. Would I could hail you still
Colleague, and brother tribune. With regret
We lose your valued service.

GRACCHUS (*turning from Drusus, speaks to Licinius.*)

Bah! 'tis foul!

Would you believe it,—these two worthy tribunes,
These noble, true, and honorable men,
Who for the disappointment I have met,
Now speak their sorrows,—would you think that these,
These very two, with simpering look, and lip
Of flattering condolence, were the men
Who at the election counted up the votes,
And thus procured by fraudulent return
That I, a tribune fair elected, stand

Here officeless? Faugh! Let's away! This meanness
That crawls and licks the dust, it sickens me.
I'd sooner meet Opimius, or such villain,
Who, what he does, does boldly. There's a show
Almost of honor in his dashing crime.
But this mean, crouching shame, that blushless seeks
Its smerchèd visage with the soiled cloak
Of honesty to wrap! Faugh! 'tis the taint
Of carrion—dead game. True hound will shun it.
They are not worth the running down. Let's off.

DRUSUS.

This 'tis to serve one's country! Taunted thus,
My conscience stands me true.

GRACCHUS.

Conscience, quoth he!

Where picked he up the word?—Conscience! ha! ha!
I had a parrot once, could talk and prate
And chatter words in its sharp querulous tone,
As though it knew their sense. Conscience, forsooth!

DRUSUS.

To rail abusive is the loser's wont.
Upon the gainer's side the laugh doth rest.

GRACCHUS.

Call you it gaining, winning as you do?
Truly you've gained what you can never lose,—
A stamp of vice,—a never changing shame
That haunts you to your grave. Did you but know it,

You've gained a loss, which makes you as a stench
In every true man's nostrils! Come, Licinius.

(Exeunt Gracchus and Licinius.)

DRUSUS.

I would arrest him in the people's name
For disrespect to their tribunes,—but that,—that——

TRIBUNE.

But that we are ashamed. Drusus, he speaks
Such bitter truths as we deserve to hear.
Would I had never joined the dirty game!
His words cling to me as a nauseous soil,
And my whole soul, meseems, doth stink of it!
We've played our honor and our souls of men
Against the Senate's monies and their lands,
And as he tells us, we have gained a loss
That damns us in the filth of our own acts.

DRUSUS.

Why, man! what means this puling face of grief!
Doff it; or you'll betray to peering eyes
The mysteries of our nice diplomacy.

TRIBUNE.

Time has been,—ere I let the Senate's gold
Filthy my itching fingers, I could stand,
Bare my clean bosom to the crowd, and feel
Lighthearted by inspection.

DRUSUS.

Pshaw! Cheer up,

And don't give way to whimsies such as this.
It was to serve the country that we labored,
And slightly doubtful means are often fit
To work an end of certain benefit. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE IV.—*Street of Rome.*

• *Fulvius and Gracchus.*

FULVIUS.

Pluto and the infernal Gods ! Give up !
What, man ! Back out before this rascal consul !
This proud Opimius ! Why, ere this I thought
His lawless rule, and grinding usurpation,
Had purged your halting conscience of its doubts.

GRACCHUS.

Fulvius, my soul hath fire enough, nor needs
Your flashing speech, of flint to tinder words,
To rouse it into action. Of my breast
The tight-drawn cord, vibrating with the touch,
Like high-tuned instrument rings back your words
In tones of passion, till almost it bursts.
What unskilled tuner are you, thus to screw
And tighten up a string already wound
Above its pitch of tone !

FULVIUS.

But, what's the matter,
That we must tamely stand, to bide this insult?
What's this Opimius? Is he god, or ghost,
Or fiend, or devil, that we shrink, and shrink,
And cower before him thus? A consul he
Of yesterday's election! Hardly more;—
And yet already he hath lessoned us
To due humility, 't would seem,—for ever
“*Give way*” 's the word! Give way! give way! forsooth!
And in the Furies' name, I would know why?
I'll not give way. No! Let him fight it out,
I'll meet him where he dares. For you, how meekly
You stand to see your labor's fruit laid waste!
Your life's work thrown aside! These he prepares
All to undo. Your laws he will repeal.
The colonizing Carthage, which himself
So lately thought—and the assembled Senate—
Then all important, now he will annul.
The faintest trace which of your name is left
Upon the country's acts, he'll foul, and blot,
And from the city's memory trample out.
Why such unheard of course? Hardly in power,
The rein he strains of his authority
Almost to bursting. Cramped and fettered laws
Are dragged and fretted to find out some term,
That to your injury may be worded thus;

The import of their execution ever
Being still the same and one, to lash at Gracchus.

GRACCHUS.

Curse on his heart, 'tis true! Find but the means,—
I tell you, find the means!—nor ever ring
The changes thus of his accursèd wrongs
On my impatient ear! Find but the means,—
This doublehearted traitor I will meet,
Nor shrink the struggle, be it to the death!

FULVIUS.

Come with me to my house; you'll meet some friends
Who wait to talk upon this matter there.

(*Exeunt.*)

SCENE V.—*Cornelia's House.*

Gracchus and Cornelia.

CORNELIA.

All wrong! all wrong! What mean, thronging our streets,
These hired bands? No Roman faces these!
Strangers who skulk at noon-day, 'neath the garb
And roughness feigned of country reapers hiding
Some ill intent. I like it not; it smacks
Of evil purpose.

GRACCHUS.

Nay ; to be trampled on !
Forever driven to the wall by fraud
From these our task-masters,—yet be reproached
When in their own base coin we pay them home
Some trifling arrears ! Curse them, I'll strike,
And with their own unholy weapons maim them !

CORNELIA.

This is a mistimed anger, and I grieve
That you to beard Opimius have resolved.
His aim is your imprudence, and you thus,
By this hotheaded Fulvius spurred, now cast
Your every point into his ready hand. .
'Tis the calm right, that you should seek to win,
Nor cheat your heart, while nursing its revenge,
To think that duty works it. Call you this,
This rampant hate, and angry violence,
Which drives a thoughtless people to the verge
Of lawless anarchy, which grasps at fraud
To work its selfish ways, and makes success,
Not right, its rule of action,—call you this,
Because you link with it some real wrong
Inflicted on a thoughtless populace,—
Call you this patriotism ? Search your heart
And read its motives clearer.

GRACCHUS.

You much wrong me,

And travesty my truest feelings, mother,
In most unworthy garb.

CORNELIA.

Would it were so !

Most willingly I'd take the wrong myself,
To know your object pure. But you have let
Your passion much mislead you. You have been
So erring in your selfish thought, to lose
The higher point of action. May you find
Occasion fitting to retrace your steps !
The time's unripe, and you would force it on,
Not by a gentle teaching to the truth,
But gag it to your own ideas of right,
And force mankind to gulp your system down.
Oh ! check this energy, whose mistimed warmth
Has in the crowd a storm of passion roused
Of inauspicious aspect. Con again
The lessons you yourself had taught, ere letting
Our moneyed landholders' oppressive frauds
Opposing frauds within your bosom wake,
Driving the noblest feelings to that verge
Where virtue becomes rashness, and ambition
Outtracks the path of right. If yet 'tis time,
Unspeak your spell. The angry turmoil sooth
Of differing tempers, which now clashing rage
Like the wild waves of some tumultuous sea,
Each lashing each to anger.

GRACCHUS.

Can it be

That I in passion thus have drowned the right ?
There is a half contrition in my heart
That speaks your judgment true. Your calmer thought
Doth damp the fierceness of my anger's hate ;
And with cooled passion, my big faults do rise
To taunt me with their folly. I will try ;
Trust me, I'll do my best ; and now farewell.
Licinia need not know all that is passing.
She has, you know, not half your courage, mother ;
Let her be quiet ; if the storm must burst,
She'll learn it time enough.

SCENE VI.—Capitol.

*Opimius, Lictors, friends of Opimius, Senators, &c.**Gracchus, Fulvius, and friends of Gracchus.**(Opimius standing by the altar, robed in white, and crowned with cypress.)*

OPIMIUS.

Thou, Jupiter Capitoline, to whom
Acceptable thus far, our offerings seem,
Watch over us and Rome !

, Lictors, remove,

And let these entrails by the aurspices
Be in accordance with all form examined.

LICTOR (*passing with the entrails strikes against Fulvius
and exclaims*)

Stand off, ye crew of traitors, and make way,
That honest men may pass.

FULVIUS.

Traitor to me ! (*Strikes him.*)

Take that to mend your manners, ribald tongue !

FIRST CITIZEN.

And that !

(*Citizens rush with daggers upon the Lictor, who falls.*)

SECOND CITIZEN.

And that !

GRACCHUS (*rushing forward.*)

Fulvius, you ruin all !

What means this mistimed brawl, unmannerly !

FULVIUS.

I've been insulted, and have not the temper
To suck up harsh words, fattening on abuse,
And nurse its quiet with the promised dream
Of what some "by-and-by" may bring to pass.
I've been insulted, and if corpses speak,
Quintus Antyllius there may calculate
What strength my passion casts into a blow.

GRACCHUS.

Too much, alas ! and not I fear to end

With this, of a poor licitor the one death ;
For many, noble are the heads whose doom
Is in that one impatient blow entailed.

OPIMIUS (*advancing.*)

Tremble, ye Roman people ! Citizens,
No more I bid you now be bold,—but rather
In the amazement of my terror, warn ye
Before offended Deity to crouch.
Ye have full cause for fear ! Our sacrifice
Profaned by blood in passion shed, unholy—
Accursèd on our heads our prayers cast back,
Heap vengeance from the gods ;—for murder soils
With bloody sacrilege our holiest rites.
Here at the altar of our angered god,
Let us now seek to humbly expiate
This impious deed. (*Turns and kneels at the altar.*)

Great Jove ! hear us and pity !

Promiscuous let thy thunders strike us not.
In wisdom judge thou, and in justice doom !

(*Corpse of Antyllus is brought forward on a bier.*)

The innocent victim which to thee we bring,
Receive in expiation of this deed
Ill-omened and unrighteous. Of our hearts
See every spouting wound interpreter,
In blood speak forth our will to right the insult
Of thy profanèd temple ; from its walls
Polluted, to wash out the bloody stain,

And make revenge co-equal with the crime.

(Rises and turns towards attendants.)

Now through the forum, by our weeping Senate

All in its bleeding livery escorted,

The consecrated victim bear, and rouse

The frightened people to revenge their god.

*(Exit Opimius with attendants, bearing the body
and followed by Senators, making loud
acclamations of grief and indignation.)*

FULVIUS.

A fig for all their weeping ! What have they

To whine and wail, like over-pampered child,

Because a noisy lictor meets his death !

GRACCHUS.

They weep for joy that in that same dead corse

A weapon you have given, which they will wield

With deadly import. Curse your reckless passion !

That in a moment's space has done more harm

Than years of sober council can unmake.

FULVIUS.

Pshaw ! You'll turn orator, and make a speech

In honor of this beggar's funeral !

With care and watching, your mind wearied out,

Doth, thus enfeebled, turn to start at shadows.

GRACCHUS.

Would it were so ! But from this hasty deed

Doth spring a progeny of thick-coming ills,

That but to gaze at chills me. Come, Licinius,
And you, Pomponius, I would speak with you.

(Exit with Licinius and Pomponius.)

FULVIUS.

It is a noble heart, though somewhat slow
To meet the exigencies of the time.

FIRST CITIZEN.

I would we had not killed this lictor, though.
Slowness sometimes is virtue. It were well
If we had been less sudden.

FULVIUS.

Well, I wish

As prompt an arm there was for every one
Of these our Senators who weeping stand
Around a paltry lictor's bier to wail.
Who would believe that this same capitol,
Which now so loudly they proclaim profaned,
Shows yet upon its walls the scattered stains
Tiberius Gracchus' blood had sprinkled there.
Him they cast forth, the refuse of their hate;
(Rome's tribune by her Senate done to death,)
No funerals were granted to our prayers;
He was the people's friend—what needed he
Of sanctifying forms and ceremonies?
But now, behold! in this unrighteous farce,
About a hireling's corse Rome's nobles stand,
In feigned penitence to bow their heads,

And in their weeping expiation seek
To magnify a fault, whose heightened crime
Upon the people's head their hate would pile.

Enter Messenger.

MESSENGER.

Sent by your friends, I come to tell you, Fulvius,
That with pretence to save the commonwealth,
Opimius, sanctioned by the Senate, issues
To the patricians and the knights, an order
That they shall all, well armed and well escorted,
Attend him in the morning; and 'tis said,
A price is set on your and Gracchus' head.

FULVIUS.

Hear you this, citizens? Who stands by me?

CITIZENS.

I,—I,—and I,—and I,—and all of us!

FULVIUS.

I thank you all. Come with me, and we'll hold
All things in readiness to meet the morning.
Huzza for Rome! but down with our proud Senate!
We will pronounce them traitors to the people,
And set a price upon their heads. Let's vote it.
Who will say "ay"?

CITIZENS.

Ay, ay.

FULVIUS.

It is pronounced.

We do decree these reverend Senators
Shall lose their heads whenever we can catch them ;
And that their weight in gold shall be the prize
Of every man who can pick up so much
By pillaging the overflowing hoards
Of these our sacred rats ; time-worshipped scourges,
Deities to whom, not hoping good, we've prayed,
But rather for the ill, we sought to shun.
Huzza then for the people ! For the Senate,
Down with them ! Hang the Senate !

CITIZENS.

Huzza ! Huzza !

Down with the Senate.

(Exeunt, riotously.)

SCENE VII.—*Street near the Statue of the Father of Gracchus.*

*Enter Gracchus, Pomponius, and Licinius. Citizens
passing and following.*

GRACCHUS.

All then seems vain. Our every scheme is nought.
Each as it nears us, in the light of hope
All radiant glitters, as in early beam

Of morning's sun, the dew besprinkled web.
But, stretch the eager hand to seize it—lo !
Our lightest touch its nothingness but proves,
And with the broken fragment of its thread
All shattered in our grasp, forlorn we stand,
Orphaned of hope, and our own fancy's fool !
Oh ! had I steeled my heart against ambition,
And in its unity but held the hope
That worked me first to action—seeking to bring
The people to that perfectness which nature
Makes their inherent right—I had not been
Thus in the web of mine own faults entangled !
My soiled hands, ungrateful to the Gods,
In impure sacrifice have lost their strength.
The workman is not equal to his task.

POMPONIUS.

Rather the task is one impracticable ;
From nature doomed to failure. For who talks
Of the crowd's fickleness, talks nothing new.
How oft to-morrow finds, where now they fawn,
Their bitter mockery, or their loudest hate !
And to-day's idol is the cast off thing
Which yesterday they trampled under foot !
Blame not the weakness of your hand, but rather
The rotten stuff you work on.

GRACCHUS.

Yet, I feel

There dwells in them a self-redeeming power.
They must by nature's instinct have the sense
That I have sought to rouse. But I, unskilful,
Play not upon their hearts. Some loftier mind
Must wake the spirit that to me is dead ;
Rousing the human soul that in them sleeps,
To its high note of harmony and truth.

(As they pass the statue of his father, Gracchus pausing stands for some time earnestly gazing at it.)

POMPONIUS.

Let us pass on.

LICINIUS.

He heeds us not. He's wrapped
In contemplation of some distant thought
That finds no home with us.

POMPONIUS.

'Twere best to leave him.

We but upon his privacy intrude.
He seems as he by gazing, hoped to drag
A spirit from his father's statue forth,
And would hold converse with him. Let us on,
And leave him to himself.

LICINIUS.

Nay,—rather we
Should closely watch him ; for in times like these
He needs his every friend. We intrude not ;
He heeds us not, nor longer knows our presence.

Following the heaving sigh, see that slow tear !
In mute communion spring they from his bosom,
All anguished with the throes of some big thought
That seeks to force its being into life,
Then struggles back into his panting breast,
Which hugs the living torture to itself.

POMPONIUS.

It is a fearful struggle ;—but he wakes.

GRACCHUS.

Let us go home. My mother watches for me ;
While my young wife, novice in sorrow, wraps
Close to her beating heart my baby boy,
And wonders why its father stays so long.

(Exit with Pomponius and Licinius.)

FIRST CITIZEN.

Would I could right him, were it with my life !
At least let's follow and keep watch for him.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Yes,—we will cheer him up ; huzza about him,
As does the crowd round Fulvius.

FIRST CITIZEN.

And get drunk,
Go mad as they do ! No, no,—in the face
Of Gracchus look, and learn there to be sober.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Truly it is a face that doth draw tears !
I never thought so great a man, and wise,

Could need the pity of poor folks like us.
But now to look at him, 'twould seem indeed
That his tried heart doth throb and ache, all one
As 'twere my own poor son's !

ACT V.

SCENE I.—*Street near Gracchus' house.*

Enter Cornelia and Licinia, with Child.

LICINIA.

I will watch here. He needs must pass this way,
And I will see him.

CHILD.

Mother, are you cold ?

LICINIA.

No, child.

CHILD.

What ails your hand to shake so, then ?

CORNELIA.

Come hither, little one. Your mother's sad ;
Her head aches ; she's not over well to-day.
Let her be quiet. She'll be better soon.

CHILD.

If she's not well, why does she stand in the street,
And gazing round to see who passes by ?

CORNELIA.

Hush ! hush ! you should be with your nurse at home,
Instead of coming to ask idle questions
Thus at street corners.

CHILD.

Nay then, what have you,
And what has mother either, got to do
Thus at street corners ? I have heard you say
Often, that women should not run the street.

LICINIA.

Peace, malapert ! Your nurse is watching for you.
Run to her and she'll take you home.

CHILD.

I will not.

LICINIA.

You will not ? What !

CHILD.

I am not naughty, mother !
I only wish you'd let me stay with you.
You look so sad and grave, as father did
This morning when he kissed me.

LICINIA.

Chatterbox !

You were asleep until your father went,
And 'twas in dressing you, I left him time
To give me thus the slip.

CHILD.

I did not sleep ;
I only held my eyes close shut, because——

LICINIA.

Because ?—Say on.

CHILD.

Because you talked so sad
It made me cry to hear you, and you know
Father laughs at me when I cry, and says
I'll never make a soldier. So I kept
My eyes close shut, and then he could not see
And thought I was asleep. It was no harm ;
Don't look so sorry, mother ; was it wrong ?
I did not think there had been harm in it.

CORNELIA.

Poor baby ! get thee home. 'Tis a sad thing
To tutor thee thus early to thy griefs.
Go home ! go home !

CHILD.

Do let me stay. I'm good.

CORNELIA.

No, no ; go home, and we'll come presently ;
And look you on my table, you will find
A pretty toy, with the new whip you wished for
To drive your wooden horse. Run home now ; quick !
Or you'll not find them there.

CHILD (*kissing her.*)

Dear Grandmama !

Mama, do kiss me too. I'd rather stay ;
But I'll be good, and you'll come quicker home,
And then I'll show you how my horse will trot.
Perhaps he'll canter too, with his new whip.

(*Exit Child with Nurse.*)

LICINIA.

Sorrow ! thou earnest teacher ! to whom life
Is but a school wherein man's heart is curbed
To do thee homage,—lay thy heavy hand
Gently as sorrow may, on that young head.
Let the deep anguish of my burdened heart
Work out the task at once, for him and me !
And for myself, I only pray that I
May be so tough of heart, it shall not break
Until my double duty is performed.

CORNELIA.

Hush ! Here are steps.

LICINIA.

'Tis Caius comes. I knew
He could not else, but he must pass this way.

CORNELIA.

It is not Caius. Here are rapid steps,
And noisy words, and clashing arms, with sounds
Of boisterous brawling, and of drunken mirth.

(Noise without.)

LICINIA.

Mother, I am afraid ! Where shall we go ?

CORNELIA.

Be still and stand aside. They will not hurt you.
I see now ;—it is Fulvius with his friends.
Oh Rome ! how art thou sunk, when such as these
May claim the name of patriots !

Enter Fulvius and noisy crowd of Citizens, armed.

CITIZEN.

Which way now ?

FULVIUS.

On to the Aventine hill ! Seize it, and make
These proud patricians learn to know their masters !

CITIZENS.

On to the Aventine hill ! Death and revenge !
Hurra ! down with the Senate ! Hurra ! on !
Death to the proud patricians ! Death and sorrow,
Hunger and cold, as they have brought on us !
Starvation seize them ! Let them rot in gutters
And gasp their lives out, sprawling on the ground
As they have bade us do. On ! on ! to crush them !
(Exeunt with Fulvius.)

LICINIA.

'Tis fearful, mother ! Surely these are not
The men who call themselves the friends of Gracchus !

CORNELIA.

I would they did not. 'Tis the festered limb
That makes his cause to halt, and there's no surgeon
So skilful he can lop the gangrene off.
I fear me, the whole body dies of it.

LICINIA.

I would I were a man, with a man's soul,
And not the coward nature modelled me !

CORNELIA.

What would you, fair face, if you were a man ?

LICINIA.

I know not what I would, but I would try
To stand by Caius as another self.
I would have cast myself before that crowd,
Instead of shrinking from its noisy riot,
And would have frowned on them, as Caius might,
Borrowing the solemn thunder of his voice,
And with his quiet majesty of mien,
Bid them go home, and hush their savage tumult.
I am a coward,—ay—a very hare
For panting fearfulness, and yet methinks,
I could for Gracchus cast my life away,
E'en as a worthless straw ! I heard last night,
When he believed me sleeping, sighs burst forth,
With groans of bitter anguish, as his heart
Would burst itself in the uttering. On his brow
I laid my soothing hand. Big sweat-drops there
Stood, as when, labor-worn, the workman tired
Doth resting pant, from overstrained toil.
I rose and pressed my lips to his, which burned
With a hot fever,—quivering too, they seemed
All tremulous, as nerved with agony.
Clinging, I hoped to cool them with my breath ;
But tear-drops then came coursing from his eyes
Slowly, as thunder-drops before the storm ;

.
.

And then, from head to foot a shivering came !
Oh mother ! It was fearful thus to see
The strong man in his agony !

CORNELIA.

My child,
E'en in my breaking heart, which overcharged
With its own miseries bursts, I feel there's room
Still left to pity thee. But helpless all,
While pity grasps the burden, until reason
Doth totter 'neath the load, yet fails she still
To ease thee of one fraction of its weight.
Let us go home. You can do no good here.

LICINIA.

No, I must stay. Gracchus went out unarmed,
As though on simple business to the Forum,
And I have brought him this. (*Shows a dagger.*)

CORNELIA.

'Tis a small help.

But here he comes.

LICINIA.

Dear heaven ! I give you thanks
For this one comfort, in so many sorrows !

Enter Gracchus and friends.

GRACCHUS.

Mother ! Licinia ! What do you here ?

LICINIA.

We watch for you. I pray you, Caius, come,

Come with me home! You shake your head; well then—
Come with me anywhere! In other worlds
We'll make a home elsewhere. Nay, smile not thus,
As though in mockery of my simple suit!
What's Rome to you that you should die for her,
And leave your wife and boy? Come, dearest,—do!
Come, drown ambition, drinking deep of love!

GRACCHUS.

Licinia, would you save your husband thus?
If I have erred ambitiously,—at least,
Not by a foul desertion bid me swell
My much repented fault. Should I a traitor—
Recreant—turn cowardly, to shun my friends,
Would you, love, longer own my tarnished name,
Or rather weep for Gracchus as one dead,
With horror shrinking from the counterfeit,
Whose shame could blight his honor! E'en yourself,
With all your gentle cowardice, would shun
And blush to name the father of your boy.
Entreat me not, then, with an early shame
To blot his fair young brow; but rather let
A father's blessing guard his orphaned pillow,
Bear him my parting kiss, and now, *farewell*.

LICINIA (*falling on her knees catches his robe.*)

No, no! Come home with me! I'd love you still,
Though you of the world's shame were made the butt;
I'd love you in my heart's world, and forget

Men's flouts and hisses, as the howling cry
Of savage beasts that roam in unseen wilds.
Men's voices hurt us not ; we'll let them pass,
And think that they are spirits, gibbering ghosts,
That wander in some stranger world to ours.
The wind doth blow and hiss us every day,
And howls and whistles in its mocking rage,
And yet we heed it not. The forest trees
Do constant whisper 'mong their summer leaves,
And yet we never fret to learn their secrets !
Men's talk, as innocent, would hurt us not,
Would we but doom them exiles from our world
And live in our own hearts !

GRACCHUS.

Dearest, you'd spurn—
None sooner than yourself—this foolish dream,
Did once your better reason find its sway.

LICINIA.

Speak to him, mother ! Bid him stay with us.
What is the world to him ? Its thought wounds not.
He would not bleed because it frowned ! Speak, mother !

CORNELIA.

Alas ! I cannot in your cause, my child.
Our life is for the world. Man doth forget
His every highest purpose, scorning it ;
And from the level of his high intent
Doth thus degrade himself.

LICINIA.

Oh ! I am mad !

I cannot reason ; I but pray,—“ come home.”

You do not leave me now as formerly,

Tribune or lawgiver, from the rostra speaking ;

Nor yet a glorious war doth summon you,

Where should death be your lot, at least I'd see

Your corpse brought home for noble funerals.

Meek victim of an angered foe, you go,—

Oh Gods ! for what ? I had forgot—take this.

(Gives the dagger.)

GRACCHUS.

As a last gift I take it. But I go

Unarmed, as he should do whose mind is fixed

To suffer violence, rather than commit it.

LICINIA.

You go before the murderers of Tiberius

To throw your life away ! And I must soon

A weeping suppliant to the river stand

To beg the corpse of Gracchus ! Mother, kneel !

Do you not love your son ? Does your heart beat ?

He is your all on earth ! Kneel with me, mother,

(Draws Cornelia to her knees.)

Pray to him here, as though he were some god !

He will not dare refuse you ! 'Twere a shame

To see him spurn his mother ! I am mad ;

I cannot pray. Pray *you* as though great Jove
Were looking down upon us ! Mother, pray !

GRACCHUS.

Mother, have pity ! Rise,—remember now,
Your oft-spoke lesson. Death is nothing, standing
Close elbowed by dishonour. Kneel not to me.

CORNELIA.

I do not kneel to you. Hear me, ye Gods !
My supplications are to you for this
My last, best hope in life ; my *only one* !
I pray ye now to give him strength to bear
This heavy trial ; parting, worse than death,
From the heart-stricken loved ones ! Go, my son,
I have no word to stop you. If your life
Without dishonour can be saved, remember
You owe it to your wife, and to your boy.
Farewell ! The Gods protect you !

GRACCHUS.

Noble mother !

Forgive me that I have so often spurned
Your wiser councils. Now the ghosts of them,
While your reproach is mute, look mournful back
To show me all my folly, and my sin.
Farewell !

*(Disengages himself gently from Licinia, who
falls fainting into Cornelia's arms.)*

And for this poor heart-broken thing,

Receive her, mother, as the legacy
Of all the love I bear you. (*Exit, with friends.*)

CORNELIA.

He is gone !

What mean my niggard eyes that they do leave
Their fount for sorrow dry ! Let madness come !
Or drivelling idiocy, that droops its life
In moping corners ! It were peaceful rest !
(*Pauses thoughtfully.*)

But this is weakness. Thus Heaven wills it not.
My laggard spirit faints before its time ;
My task is not yet done. Up ! up ! and work !
Life yet has duties, and my comfort is
Yet to fulfil them. Daughter ! Daughter ! wake !
We must go seek our boy, who waits us still,
To show us how his wooden horse can trot !
Oh ! what a motley is this struggling world !

SCENE II.—Aventine Hill.

Gracchus and Fulvius. Crowds of Citizens in the distance.

FULVIUS.

I'll bear no further cringing.

GRACCHUS.

I ask none.

But rather that you'd meet a noble risk
To save our friends by what perchance may prove
Our proper immolation. Come with me
To plead before the Senate.

FULVIUS.

I am tired.

You have my son ; do with him what you list.
He's soft enough to coax and wheedle for you !
His mother's readiness of tears he has,
And blushing face, and gently cringing voice,
No gift have I of words, nor will I crouch
The Senate from its crabbed whim to move.
I come here armed for fight.

GRACCHUS.

And will, I fear,
Make sooner than not meet the war you seek.

Enter Messenger.

What news ? Your eager look seems full of speech.

MESSENGER.

The Senate mock your offers, and have seized
Young Fulvius prisoner. Criminals, they say,
Before they plead for mercy, should surrender.

FULVIUS.

They say we plead for mercy ! Hear you that !

MESSENGER.

Opimius, eager for hostilities,
Advances with a corps of infantry,
Backed by a company of Cretan archers.

FULVIUS.

Hurra ! I will prepare for them. Ho ! friends,
Come up ! we've work on hand. *(Exit.)*

GRACCHUS.

And I, alas !
Have nearly done that share which falls to me.

SCENE III.—Streets of Rome.

*Confusion of fighting. Citizens and troops passing to
and fro. Then enter two citizens, wounded.*

FIRST CITIZEN.

I pray you bind my arm. Nay, not so tight !
Your whole of fear was cast into that jerk.
Be easy ; of too little moment are we
For them to follow us. Beneath their thoughts
Are we to feed or kill. As we may starve
Until our bodies trip them in the streets,
So may we live, if from their dignity
We of our lubbard carcass keep the sight,

Nor shock them with the thought that we are men
Who breathe Heaven's air like them.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Well, I'll take heed
To keep me from their track. That rascal Fulvius
Will scarce again tempt me to meet them.

FIRST CITIZEN.

Hang him !

It was most foul to run and leave us there,
All weltering too, in wounds and broken bones !
And then of men to see the difference !
How Gracchus stood, and with his cry of "*Peace !*"
Did check Opimius (who strewed corpses round),
And cried "*Shame on you, Consul ! Spare your people !*"
And would not leave the ground, though all unarmed,
Until he was dragged off, and crying still
" Consul, you break the pith of your own strength !
" The people is the sinew of the country.
" In mercy spare your slaughter !"

SECOND CITIZEN.

Here are troops !
Help us, great Jupiter ! Troops ! troops ! Let's run.
(*Exeunt.*)

*SCENE IV.—Temple of Diana.**Gracchus, Licinius, Philocrates.**Enter Pomponius.*

POMPONIUS.

Fulvius, unsaved by his ignoble flight,
Is seized and slain. Our victors lap up gore
Like thirsty hound, and livid death now sits
The close familiar of our firesides.
Mothers, who but just now sent forth their sons
With life all blooming, hug a bloody corpse;
While widows weep, bewildered children stare
On stiffening limbs which but this morning's sun
Might see them frolic with. One slaughter-house—
Rome suicidal dies 'neath her own blows.
The dastard crowd, all frightened, crouching shrink
From the red death that tracks them, and in hopes
To win impunity, now crack their throats
With loud huzzas, and adulation forced
Of these their task-masters. With bended brows,
Heads leaning towards each other, then they name
What price your head doth in the Senate bear;
While their slow fingers, as an itching seized them,
Do round their weapons' handles rub themselves.
I would not trust their love.

GRACCHUS.

Slight cause have they
Longer to couple love and Gracchus' name.
Oh ! I have sinned most heavily to drag them
Like sheep thus to the slaughter. There's an instinct
That makes man bold in right, but coward stamps him
Defending wrong. This holy weapon I
Struck from the people's grasp, and blunted it
With bold injustice. By aggression roused,
I answered with aggression. Wrong met wrong.
Blood followed, and upon its smoking tracks,
How with fierce joy the Senate raised its cry,
Hallooing to the vengeance, while unnerved,
All paralyzed of strength, the people's arm
Fell lifeless in its effort ! Vice met vice.
When moral virtue fled, Reason abashed
Shrank timid from her post, and Justice threw
The tangled reins of the State to open license.
 reared her haughty head, and frowned down Right.

Enter Cornelia hastily.

CORNELIA.

 seek surer refuge. In this shrine
Our slender trust is left.

GRACCHUS.

 You, mother—here !
Follow not thus this shattered wreck, but think
Your son is dead already.

CORNELIA.

Slander not
The uninjured shapings of your body's strength,
Nor shame your mother, calling thus her son
Some weak and shattered thing.

GRACCHUS.

'Tis not indeed
The body fails me, but my heart is sick.
I'm wearied in the struggle and would die !
Death frights the happy ; but the sorrow-worn
Springs to its rest, all hopeful as the school-boy
Rejoicing in his promised holiday.

CORNELIA.

Man has no right to name his hour of rest.
Up and be doing ! 'Tis our being's law,
Till heaven shall give release. Life's duties swarm ;
Each moment with its task, marks lethargy
The heaviest sin of man. Up ! up ! and work !
How should we dare to make a whim our guide,
When obligations crowd us with their claims ?
Fulfil the uncanceled bonds ! Let reckoned dues
Prove life by right is idle, then might man,
Manumised at will, his fettered being shift.
But you, high duty's bondsman, would defraud—
Shunning its task—the world of what you owe !

GRACCHUS.

I've striven till my heart with hoping faints.

All wearied shrink I from the thought of life,
Whose fear doth fright me like the hideous dream
Of some strange midnight horror.

CORNELIA.

Rouse ! For shame !

Wake up your flagging energies ; be bold
To probe beneath these flutterings ; you will find
Your courage sound beneath them. For the right,
Man even in despair should ever strive.
The very effort, howsoever vain,
Is always something gained. To the great work
It warms the blood of the world, which wrestles on
Still against failure, like the strong man struggling,
Until the end of truth at last is reached.
We are the thews and sinews of the world,
And in our efforts there is nothing lost ;
All work to good or ill. Go with these friends ;
For life and duty strive ; nor be the coward
Who, shrinking, dreads on his own heart to look,
And dies, to shun responsibility.
My son, I know, can never thus be brought
By fear to shirk his manhood.

GRACCHUS.

Mother, I go.

May heaven so bless you, as your son shall strive
To prove the honor and the love he bears you,
By working out the noble thoughts you teach.

CORNELIA.

Then once again farewell! These bursting tears
Now come to show the woman's heart, whose boldness,
Your sickly resolution to upbraid,
Usurped the man. Oh! were they tears of blood,
Feebly they'd speak my anguish. (*Exit Cornelia.*)

GRACCHUS.

Come, Pomponius,
Lead on. I'll follow you. Philocrates,
You've ever been a true friend to your master,
Take with my thanks this trifling boon as token
Of gratitude and love. Be to my son (*Offers a ring.*)
What you have been to me.

PHILOCRATES.

Have I offended,
That sharing with you thus far all your fortunes,
I now should from your danger be thrust off?
I will not leave you.

GRACCHUS.

True heart! Then, come on.

(*Exeunt.*)

*SCENE V.—Bridge near Rome.**Enter Gracchus, Pomponius, Licinius, Philocrates.*

POMPONIUS.

We've reached our point. You, Gracchus, hasten on.
Philocrates, 'twere best to follow him.
Methinks, Licinius, you and I, at bay,
With the vantage of this bridge, should hold awhile
Some scores of our pursuing enemy.
Our farewells, Gracchus, have no time for words.

GRACCHUS.

True deeds live not in words. 'Twould pain me more
To leave you to the death you rush to seek,
But that I feel, though striving still to keep it,
My life is forfeit to this day's disasters.

PHILOCRATES.

The enemy is on us. Master, fly!

GRACCHUS.

Come then, good friend; and you brave hearts, farewell.

(Exit Gracchus with Philocrates.)

LICINIUS.

Now at their highest let us stake our lives;
A bloody ransom for the life of Gracchus.

Enter Opimius with troops.

OPIMIUS.

Off, traitors! Clear the way!

POMPONIUS.

Stand back ! we carry
Deaths for some score of you.

OPIMIUS.

Out, villains ! Back !
Charge them, my men ! This mockery of fight
Doth shame your manhood. What, ye coward rabble !
Shrink ye before two men ! Get on, ye scum !
You rate your lives too high ! They are not worth
Such doubt and higgling for. On ! There you go !
Cut down the rascals. (*They fight ; several are slain.*
Opimius strikes at and wounds Licinius.)

Ha ! You got it then.

LICINIUS.

A scratch ! I'd stand my ground with fifty such.
Come on ; we're only warming to the fight.
(*They fight again and Licinius falls.*)
I've done my last, Pomponius. Make the most
Of your unaided strength. Each moment brings
Perhaps a life to Gracchus. (*Dies.*)

POMPONIUS.

Noble friend,
I have no time to weep. Your merits speak
Full as the hundred mouths whose gashes pour
Your flooding lifeblood out. (*Soldiers attack him again.*)
No breathing time ! (*They fight. Several of the enemy*
fall, and at last Pomponius.)

OPIMIUS.

You're done with now.

POMPONIUS.

Curses on this weak arm
That could not stay you longer. (Dies.)

OPIMIUS.

Fellows, on !
We've lost here too much time. Its weight in gold,
Remember, is the price of Gracchus' head.
(Soldiers rush over the bridge, trampling on
bodies, and exeunt.)

SCENE VI.—Public Road.

Several Citizens.

FIRST CITIZEN.

May the Gods guard him. 'Tis a hard run chase.

SECOND CITIZEN.

And he'll be beaten in it. Here he comes.

Enter Gracchus and Philocrates.

FIRST CITIZEN.

How the sweat stands in big drops on his brow !
He's quite outworn with running.

THIRD CITIZEN.

Here, on horseback
Comes Septimulieus, who so often boasts

The warmth of his friendship. He'll be like
To lend the beast to save his periled life.

Enter Septimulieus and another Citizen on horseback.

GRACCHUS.

Prythee, your horse, my friend. I have no strength
To course it farther thus.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

I've hurt my foot,
I cannot run, and would not dare stand here
To let Opimius see me give you aid.
Make your best speed ; I can do nothing for you.

GRACCHUS (*to other citizen.*)

And you, are you too, friend, hurt in the foot ?

CITIZEN.

No ; but you'd best pass on. I cannot lend
Nor care to risk my horse.

PHILOCRATES.

Come, master, on !

They have no help for us. Their hearts are dead
For very fright within them, and are numbed
To the forgetfulness of friendship. Fear
Doth from the coward's choked up bosom chase
All feeling else. The enemy is here.

(Exeunt Gracchus and Philocrates.)

FIRST CITIZEN.

You might have lent your horse, if for the sake
Only of bygone kindness.

SEPTIMULIEUS.

Hold your tongue,
Or I for treason 'gainst the state impeach you.
Huzza ! I say, for Rome and for Opimius !

Enter Opimius, &c.

OPIMIUS.

Which way went Gracchus ? (*Septimulieus points.*)

Thanks, good fellow ! Come,
There's gold you know for him who wins this game.

(Exit Opimius, followed by Septimulieus &c.)

FIRST CITIZEN.

That fellow owes to Gracchus his son's life ;
And more than that, saving his family
From beggary and ruin. Gracchus lent him
Four thousand sesterces to aid him once
When troubles thronged him, and I know right well
These never were repaid.

SECOND CITIZEN.

Let's follow on

To watch what's doing. (*Exeunt.*)

SCENE VII.—*Grove of the Furies.*

Enter hastily Gracchus and Philocrates.

GRACCHUS.

Here must I stop. Exhaustion seizes me.

Ye Goddesses, grim tenants of this grove,
Sprung up in vengeance from the angry blood
Of Coelus, shed by his exasperate son,
Receive me, a self-offered sacrifice
To ward your vengeance from unhappy Rome.
Let my spilt blood that soon will sprinkle round
Upon your dark-leaved cedars' roots, its life,
Smooth down those jealousies, and heal dissensions
Whose earthquake troubles in their tremblings rock
The fated city to its threatened fall.
Methinks ye heed my prayer. I see ye now.
Your blood-shot eyes gaze on me with a look
Inexorable and yet half in pity.
Your serpent hair towards me hissing seems
As 'twould th' expiatory victim seize !
Officiating priest, my brow I bind
With cedar wreaths, for my own sacrifice,
And wait the blow that to your vengeance gives me.
Philocrates, there yet is time. Escape.

PHILOCRATES.

Never.

Enter Opimius with troops, Lucullus, Septimulieus, &c.

OPIMIUS.

There stands the traitor. Down with him !
Ye pause, ye rabble crew, as though ye saw
Some god to wonder at.

SOLDIER.

Methinks it is.

I would not dare to touch him for my life.

SECOND SOLDIER.

Nor I. The thought would haunt me to my grave.

*(They throw down their arms, and Lucullus
rushes to strike Gracchus.)*

LUCULLUS.

Then take thy death from me.

*(Philocrates throws himself in the way, receives the blow,
and at the same time strikes Lucullus. Both fall.)*

Base slave! Stand off!

He 's killed me. Oh! to die by a slave's hand!

GRACCHUS *(looking at Philocrates.)*

And thou art gone, my last true friend, before me.

(Septimulieus creeps behind Gracchus and stabs him.)

'Tis done! I thank ye, Gods! *(Dies.)*

SEPTIMULIEUS.

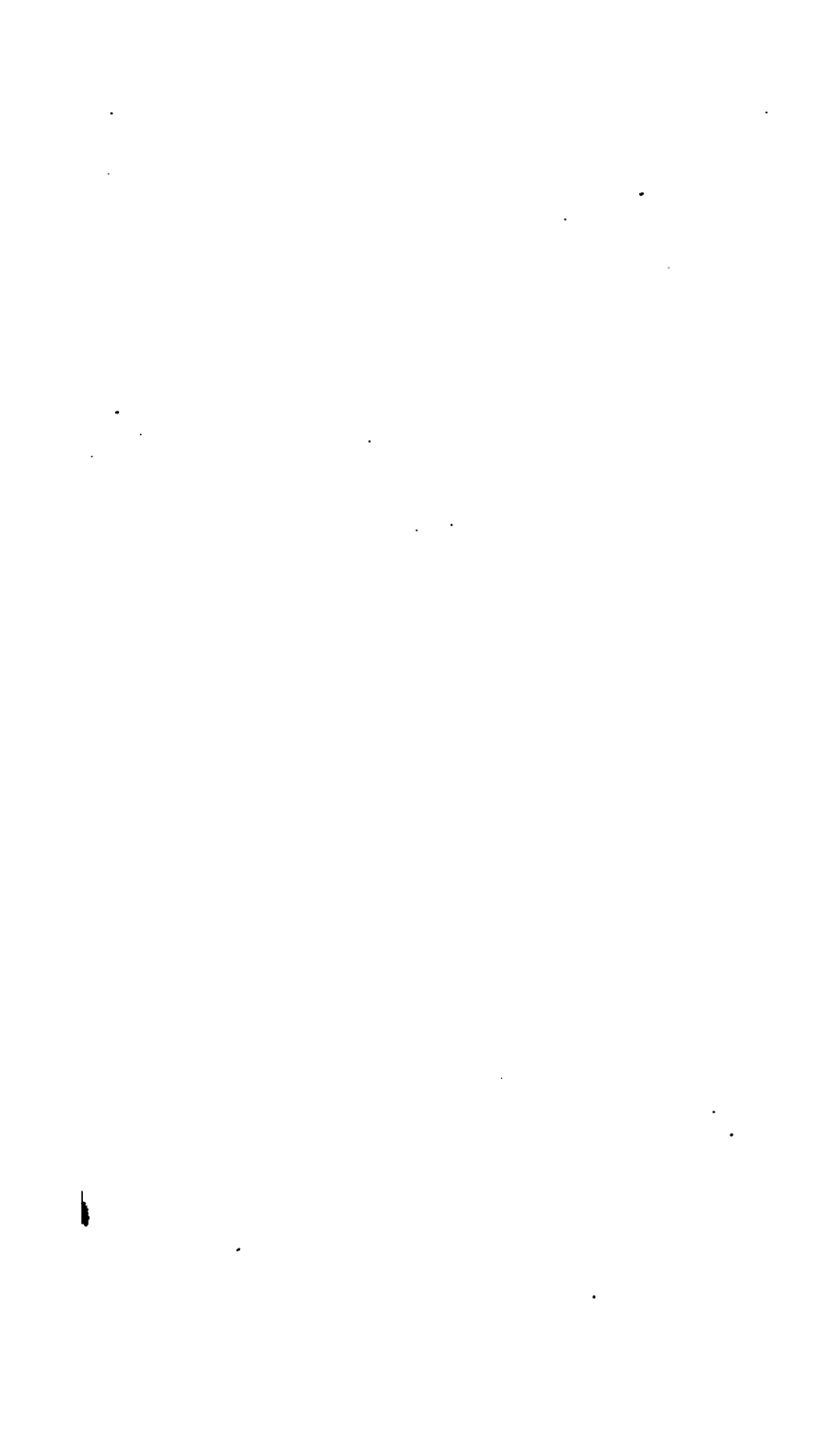
The gold is mine!

Consul, the gold is mine!

OPIMIUS.

Villain! it is.







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